

The New Relationships Found in Jesus Christ
Colossians 3:18-4:1

Introduction

How my relationship with David S. changed in college after we both got saved

1. This is the way it should be; once we are **“in Christ”** every relationship we have with another human being should changed
 - a. At a minimum, we are a new creation in Christ which means we should respond differently to those around us, whether they are saved or not
 - b. This is doubly true when those we are interacting with are also **“in Christ”**
 - c. I’ve titled this teaching session, “The New Relationships Found in Jesus Christ”
2. Up to this point in his letter, Paul has been focusing on the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ in an attempt to prevent the Colossians from moving away from faith in Christ alone:
 - a. There were apparently some in the church that were trying to convince them that they needed more than faith in Jesus, including all sorts of legalistic practices, religious rules, additional knowledge gained through mystical experiences, etc.
 - b. It’s not clear how far along this path they were, but Paul certainly didn’t want them to end up like the Galatians who had abandoned the Gospel for what Paul refers to as another gospel which isn’t really the gospel
 - c. So, much of chapters 1-2 are highly theological and form the foundation for what they should think and believe about Jesus and their faith and position in Him
3. Last week, in chapter 3 Paul did what he often did in his letters, which is move from theology to practical application:
 - a. There he called on the Colossians to turn their attention back to Christ and away from the religious legalism, empty and deceitful philosophy, and mystical practices
 - b. Because they had been raised up with Christ, he called on them to keep seeking and setting their minds on the things above, the things of Christ
 - c. Because they would someday be revealed with Christ in glory, he called on them to put to death the old sinful behavior and desires of the past
 - d. Finally, because they had been chosen by God in Christ, he called on them to put on the virtues of Christ
4. The last virtue Paul mentioned was the principle of doing **“whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”** (3:17) and this becomes the launching pad for what he wrote in 3:18-4:1, our passage for today:
 - a. These verses contain specific, real-life examples of where Paul wanted the Colossians to apply this principle of doing all things in the name of the Lord Jesus
 - b. He focuses on relationships, specifically those between husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves

- c. Paul did something similar in Ephesians 5:15-6:9 where he described what it means to walk wisely in Christ and to be filled with the Spirit, and 21 of the 28 verses (two thirds) deal with the relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves
- d. Both of these passages deal with applying our faith in Christ to these relationships and suggest at least two things:
 - 1) When we live out our faith in Christ and do everything in the name of the Lord, it should affect our relationships
 - 2) Our faith in and knowledge of Christ should direct our behavior in these relationships

A. The behavior of husbands and wives should be reflective of their faith in Jesus Christ (3:18-19)

- 1. A wife's faith in Jesus should be demonstrated through submission to her husband (READ 3:18):
 - a. The word Paul uses here means to set or place under, and in this context refers to a wife placing herself under the authority of her husband
 - b. The Bible establishes that the husband is the head of the wife, meaning that he has been given responsibility for her and authority over her by God:
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 11:3: **"But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of woman, and God is the head of Christ"**
 - 2) Ephesians 5:23: **"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church..."**
 - 3) This was established by God back in the Garden when He created Adam first and then Eve to be his helpmate (READ Genesis 2:18-24)
 - 4) So, there is a created order by God in the relationship between husband and wife, with the husband as the head and the wife as the helpmate who comes alongside him
 - a) Now lest we think this is some demeaning or devaluing thing for women, nothing could be further from the truth Biblically
 - b) Submission is a Christian virtue:
 - Christ Himself exemplified submission: He is not only subject to God the Father, but subjected Himself to the limitations of human flesh, to his earthly parents, the Roman authorities, and to death on the cross
 - Every one of us is called to subject ourselves to someone or something: to God, to governing authorities, even to one another
 - c) Plus, the Bible repeatedly holds women and wives in high regard and incredible examples of faith
 - c. Paul uses the passive voice here because this is something a wife is to do voluntarily, not something that is forced upon her by her husband:
 - 1) Paul writes here that a wife's willful submission to her husband is **"fitting in the Lord"**; this means it's proper and appropriate

Discussion with Garland about Dayton manager's foul language
--

- 2) Paul gives other reasons elsewhere:
 - a) In Titus 2:5 he says a wife should be subject to her own husband so as not to dishonor the word of God (Titus 2:5)

- b) In 1 Peter 3:1 it says that when a wife has a husband who is disobedient to the Word of God, he may be won without a word by the submissive behavior of his wife
- d. One thing that stands out to me in this verse, is that Paul uses the word for submission or subjection rather than the word obey which he does for children and slaves:
 - 1) I think we would be hard pressed to find evidence in the Bible that wives are to obey their husbands like children are to obey their parents
 - 2) They are to submit themselves to their husbands authority and leadership as their head, but not called to blindly obey
 - 3) In fact, Paul summarizes the teaching for wives in Ephesians 5:33 this way: **“and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband”**
 - 4) So, a wife’s submission is an act of respect toward her husband and the authority given to him by God, not an act of obedience, and she should never disobey God in her submission to her husband

Tamara Johnson’s response whenever Dave and her disagreed

- 2. A husband’s faith in Jesus should be demonstrated through love for his wife (READ 3:19):
 - a. Paul uses the Greek word agapao here which has multiple nuances:
 - 1) Friberg: love based on evaluation and choice, a matter of will and action
 - 2) Lindel/Scott: to treat with affection
 - 3) Thayer: to be full of goodwill
 - 4) Louw and Nida: love for someone based on sincere appreciation and high regard
 - 5) Ultimately, it is the finest and most significant Christian virtue and involves action not just feeling or emotions
 - b. Paul gives a broader description of what this kind of love should look like in Ephesians 5:25-33):
 - 1) A husband’s love for his wife should mimic Christ’s love for the Church (READ 5:25a)
 - 2) A husband’s love for his wife should be sacrificial (READ 5:25b)
 - 3) A husband’s love for his wife should be purposeful (READ 5:26-27)
 - 4) A husband’s love for his wife should be nourishing and cherishing (READ 5:28-30)
 - 5) A husband’s love for his wife should be as important as his love for himself (READ 5:33)
 - c. Paul contrasts this kind of love with a warning; he warns husbands **“not to be embittered against”** their wives (3:19b):
 - 1) To become embittered means to become angry and resentful, generally because we feel like we’ve been treated unfairly or disrespectfully
 - 2) Back in Garden after the Fall, we saw foreshadowing of this when instead of taking responsibility for his sin, Adam said, **“The woman whom You gave me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.”** (Genesis 3:12)
 - 3) We’ve likely all experienced bitterness or resentment at some point in our lives, and Paul warns husbands against letting something like that develop and fester towards their wives
 - 4) Peter may have had this in mind when he wrote, **“You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.”** (1 Peter 3:7)

3. Takeaway: our relationship with our spouses should reflect the faith we have in Jesus Christ
 - a. A wife's faith in Jesus Christ demands that she respect the authority He has placed over her in her husband as her head; just like Christ subjects Himself to God the Father, she is to subject herself to her husband and respect his authority over her
 - b. A husband's faith in Jesus Christ demands that he love his wife like Christ loves the church, being affectionate with her, sacrificing himself for her, nourishing and cherishing her just as Christ does us

B. The behavior of children and parents should be reflective of their faith in Jesus Christ (3:20-21)

1. A child's faith in Jesus should be demonstrated through obedience to his or her parents (READ 3:20):
 - a. The word that Paul uses here refers to listening attentively, and by implication heeding what is said
 - b. This is translated as **"obey"** in most modern translations, but more is implied than obedience to commands; rather it is a call for children to heed their parents **"in all things"**; not simply obey their commands:
 - 1) We see this illustrated throughout Proverbs (see Proverbs 1:8-9; 3:1-2; 4:1-13)
 - 2) What Paul is referring to here is not simply children obeying their parent's commands, but listening attentively to all that their parents teach them
 - c. The reason children are to do this is because **"it is well-pleasing to the Lord"** (3:20b):
 - 1) In 2 Corinthians 5:9 Paul wrote that we should **"have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him"**
 - 2) In Ephesians 5:10 he wrote that we should be **"trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord"**
 - 3) The same is true of children; they should have as their primary ambition pleasing the Lord by listening attentively to what their parents teach them and heeding it
 - 4) This is why Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:1 that children are to **"obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right"**
 - 5) If that isn't motivation enough, Paul listed two perks of honoring parents in this way: that life may be well with them and that they might live long upon the earth (Ephesians 6:2-3)
2. A parent's faith in Jesus should be demonstrated through not exasperating their children (READ 3:21):
 - a. You'll notice that Paul actually directs this verse and the parallel verse in Ephesians 6:4 specifically to fathers, likely because they are the head of the family, but it might also be that father's can be more prone to be authoritarian or demanding and less compassionate and understanding when it comes to children (especially so in Greco-Roman culture)
 - b. But, I believe the principle here applies just as equally to mothers
 - c. The command Paul gave is to not exasperate or provoke our children:
 - 1) The word means to make them become resentful or bitter
 - 2) In Ephesians 6:4 Paul says, **"do not prove your children to anger"**
 - 3) Fathers are to avoid this **"so that they [children] will not lose heart"** (3:21)

Chris Buckmaster's bitterness toward his father
as a result of his provocation

- d. Rather than provoke our children, we are to **"bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"** (Ephesians 6:4b):
 - 1) When children are raised in an environment that is just a list of man-made do's and don'ts, and discipline and punishment when they disobey, it often leads to provocation and discouragement
 - 2) Raising children is much more than that, especially as Christian parents
 - 3) Living out our faith in Jesus Christ means that we will teach our children the ways of the Lord, and not only teach them how to love, honor, and obey Him, but demonstrate our faith in Christ for them so they have an example to follow
 - 4) This was God's purpose in the commands He gave to Israel in Deuteronomy 6:4-25 (READ)
- 3. Takeaway: our relationship as parents and children should reflect the faith we have in Jesus Christ:
 - a. Children should learn to heed what their parents teach them as an expression of faith their own faith in Jesus Christ; this is right and pleasing to the Lord
 - b. Parents should raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord as an expression of our faith in Jesus Christ

C. The behavior of employees and managers should be reflective of their faith in Jesus Christ (3:22-4:1)

- 1. These next verses were directed at slaves and master which was common in the 1st century:
 - a. As I mentioned in my introduction to this letter, half of the citizens of Colossae were slaves so we can assume at least half of the church was as well, probably more
 - b. The fact that Paul speaks to masters here means that some in the church owned slaves
 - c. We have to keep three things in mind here:
 - 1) First, slavery at this time in the Roman empire was very different than what occurred here in American history:
 - a) Slaves were generally spoils of war or those who had sold themselves into slavery as bond-servants
 - b) Masters had legal rights over their slaves, but generally treated their slaves with dignity and respect
 - c) Slaves could marry, accumulate wealth, run businesses, own property, and purchase their own freedom
 - d) They worked in all kinds of industries and were generally paid a salary
 - 2) Second, this may explain why when Paul and Peter addressed slavery in their epistles, they didn't call for the abolishment of it or chastise masters for having slaves; instead, they gave instructions on how to live within the system in a Christ-like fashion
 - 3) Third, in our society today we no longer have slaves and masters, but we can apply the principles Paul laid for masters and slaves to the workplace
- 2. A slave's faith in Jesus was to be demonstrated through serving his or her master with sincerity of heart (READ 3:22-24):

- a. Paul's point here is that slaves were not to simply serve their masters "**according to eye service**" (literal) as those who were simply trying to please men, but they were to serve their masters with a sincere heart out of respect for the Lord
 - b. In everything they did, they were to do it "**heartily**" (which means with considerable effort), and they were to do it as if they were doing it for the Lord rather than their master
 - c. Because of their faith in Jesus, they were to serve their masters not with eye service trying to please men, but heartily to please the Lord
 - d. Their reward would ultimately come from the Lord because it was Him they were serving
3. A master's faith in Jesus was to be demonstrated through right and equal treatment of his or her slave (READ 4:1):
- a. Literally Paul wrote, "**Masters afford to your slaves what is right and equal**":
 - 1) The first word, "**right**", refers to that which is right in the eyes of God
 - 2) The second word refers to equality or fairness and is used in other two other verses in the NT, 2 Corinthians 8:13-14 (READ)
 - b. Paul was referring to masters treating their slaves as equals because they too had a Master in heaven, and this is supported by what he wrote in Ephesians 6:9: "**And masters, do the same things to them (referring back to how slaves were to serve their masters), and give up threatening knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him**"
4. Takeaway: our relationships at work, whether we report to a manager or manager others, should reflect the faith we have in Jesus Christ:
- a. If we report to a manager, we should serve him or her heartily, not merely for show or to please men, but to please the Lord

Making the decision to serve Scott in this way even though it didn't begin well

- b. If we manager others, we should afford them what is right and treat them as equals knowing we too have a Master in heaven