Relationships of the Transformed Life

Colossians 3:18-4:1

Emmanuel Baptist Church – PM Service – August 8, 2021

Introduction:

Romans 6:6 tells us that “our old self” or the “old man,” our unregenerate self, all we were before Christ, is dead.

Now that we have “been raised with Christ” (Colossians 3:1) and have been made a “new creature” in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), there is a process of transformation taking place that we might be conformed to the image of Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 8:29). It is this transformation or sanctification process that we have been talking about in Colossians 3. This transformation is progressive “from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

What is it that we are being transformed into? 2 Corinthians 3:18 says “the image of the Lord.” Colossians 3:10 says, we are “being renewed in knowledge after the image of [our] creator.”

The Greek word for image, eikón (i-kone') means copy or likeness. This is the goal of the sanctification process, to be transformed into the image or likeness of Christ.

Romans 8:29 uses a different word, the word “conformed.”

> 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed** to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

The Greek word for “conformed” means having the same form as another. The word “transformed” then, refers to the process, the sanctification process. Conformed refers to the finished product; becoming like Christ.

In Colossians 3:3-5 we are told that since we have died, that is, died to sin (Romans 6:6-7), we are to “put to death therefore what is earthly in [us],” that is, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

In Colossians 3:8-9, we were given a list of things we are to “put off: “anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk and lying to one another. Notice that all of these things we are to put off involve a choice on our part, and are most often manifested in what comes out of our mouths; “anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk and lying to one another.”

In verse 12-13a we looked at the in-working of the transformed life, or the work going on inside of us as we are being transformed into the image of Christ. This also involved choices. We learned when we studied these verses that these choices are made

(Bible quotes from ESV unless otherwise noted)

possible by our transformed life in Christ, the "new man," which created within us the capacity for compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, along with bearing with one another.

Paul then gives us additional choices we must make as we are being transformed into the image of Christ. So, what are these choices? Colossians 3:13b: forgiving one another, Colossians 3:14: love for one another and Colossians 3:15: letting our hearts be ruled by peace. These we called the outpouring of the transformed life.

Then in verses 16-17 we saw the outworking of the transformed life which included: being saturated by the word of Christ (Colossians 3:16). The word of Christ should be completely at home in us, dwelling in us abundantly or extravagantly; in other words, in large quantities or in excess. There should be no moderation in the intake of God's word into our lives.

And in verse 17 Paul sums it all up when he says "and whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." The word "whatever," pas, includes all things and anything. "In word or deed" is talking about the inside and the outside, in other words, every thought or action. No matter what we do, we are to do "everything in the name of the Lord Jesus." This is what all of the "put offs" and the "put ons" in Colossians 3 are all about. 1 Corinthians 10:31 is a similar summary verse. It says,

> 31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

This should be the ultimate goal of every believer, to bring glory to God in all that we do.

Now I want you to notice how all of this correlates beautifully to how we relate to one another or how we are to get along with one another.

- Verse 8 – "put them all away, or "put off": anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth."
- Verse 9 – "Do not lie to one another."
- Verse 11 –No matter who we are, our culture, social status, background, Galatians 3:28 adds, whether we are male or female, or any other human distinction you can come up with; we are all the same in Christ.
- Verse 12 –Commands us to put on "compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience"
- Verse 13 –Says we are to put up with one another and to forgive each other
- Verse 14 – Says above all of these things, to "put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

(Bible quotes from ESV unless otherwise noted)

- Verse 15 –Tells us to "let the peace of Christ rule in [our] hearts" and to be thankful.
- Verse 16 –Exhorts us to saturate our lives with the word of Christ, "teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom", worshiping "with thankfulness in our hearts to God."
- And Verse 17 – "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

If, as we are transformed into the image of Christ, we put off and put on these things it will impact every relationship in our lives. So, it makes perfect sense, as we move to Colossians 3:18 to 4:1, that Paul moves into the discussion of the relationships of the transformed life. Paul is going to look at three household relationships:

- Husbands and Wives (3:18-19)
- Children and Parents (3:20-21)
- Bondservants and Masters (3:22-4:1)

Please follow with me as I read Colossians 3:18-4:1,

> 18 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, 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 justly and fairly, knowing that you also have
> a Master in heaven.

If you go all the way back to the book of Genesis and read 2:18-25 you will see that right at the beginning God established the institution of the family. Jesus, addressing a question from the Pharisees, confirms this fact in Matthew 19:1-6. The family is, in many ways, the most important relationship in our human lives. Warren Wiersbe says, "As goes the home, so goes society and the nation." (Be Complete (Colossians), Warren Wiersbe, p. 139)

So, it makes perfect sense, as Paul talks about the life transformed in Christ that he moves into a discussion of what this looks like in a family.

(Bible quotes from ESV unless otherwise noted)

Husbands and Wives (3:18-19)

The first relationship of the transformed life that Paul is going to discuss is the relationship between husbands and wives. Colossians 3:18-19 says,

> 18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

Often when we look at verses like Colossians 3:18-19, our discussion becomes one of equality between men and women. The idea of a woman submitting to her husband has been equated with the woman being less than the man. However, as we look at these two verses together, we will see that this is not at all what Paul is teaching. We have already noted from Galatians 3:28 that "there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus," says Paul. Before God we are all one. That is to say, whether we are male or female, God does not look upon one as more important than the other or of more value than the other. We are all the same before God in Christ Jesus.

The same can be said about God the Father and God the Son. We already noted way back in Colossians 2:9 where Paul said, "For in [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily," that there is equality in the Godhead.

The word for deity theotés (theh-ot'-ace) expresses God's (personal) deity as belonging to Christ. The word focuses on Christ physically embodying the Godhead through his incarnation. The word "fullness" pleroma (play-ro-ma) means the sum total of all divine power and attributes. So, the fullness of God dwelt in, or permanently inhabited Jesus in his physical incarnation, with all of the divine powers and attributes of God. In the simplest terms, Paul is saying that Jesus the Christ is God and an equal member of the Godhead.

And yet, in Philippians 2:5-8 we read,

> 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jesus, though an equal member of the Godhead, submitted to God the Father and took the form of a servant, humbling himself. Jesus did not do this because he had to. After all, the Father and the Son are equal members of the Godhead. Philippians 2:6 says, he "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself." This is not something Christ had to do, he did it willingly. Jesus said in John 6:28,

(Bible quotes from ESV unless otherwise noted)

> [38] For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

Christ willing submitted to the Father. Christ's submission had nothing to do with equality or worth. He freely ranked under the Father. This is the idea of the Greek word for submit hupotassó (hoop-ot-as'-so). It means to subject oneself to, to obey. The form of the verb (hypotassesthe) is the middle voice and it shows that the submission is to be voluntary.

In the parallel passage in Ephesians 5:22-24 we read,

> [22] Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Submission is not to be forced on a wife by a demanding husband, but the wife is to willingly submit to her husband in the same way she is to submit to the Lord. Notice here we are not talking about a woman submitting to all men. This is not what Paul is teaching here. Paul says in Colossians 3:18 "Wives, submit to your husbands" and in Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit to your own husbands." Paul is talking about the submission of a wife within the marriage relationship to her own husband.

What about Husbands? Notice in Colossians 3:19 Paul says,

> [19] Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

The Greek word for love here is "agapé." Agapé love is a selfless, unconditional love that is manifested by our actions toward another. Agapé love is demonstrated by what we do not by what we say. In fact, what we say is meaningless unless it is substantiated by our actions toward another. So, as we serve one another, give of ourselves to others and even sacrifice ourselves for others, we are showing agapé love.

This fits perfectly with what Paul says in Ephesians 5:25-27,

> [5] Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] 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.

(Bible quotes from ESV unless otherwise noted)

How is the husband to love his wife? "As Christ loved the church." How did Christ love the church? "He gave himself up for her." What does it mean that Christ "gave himself up for her?" Well, we just read this in Philippians 2:5-8. Let's read it again,

> 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Husbands are to empty themselves by taking on the form of a servant. As Christ loved the church to the point of giving himself up for her, a husband is to love his wife to the point of giving himself up for her.

The husband-and-wife relationship is NOT one way. It is not only about the wife submitting to her husband, as we so often get hung upon. It is also about the husband emptying himself, taking the form of a servant, and giving himself up for his wife, as Christ did for the church.

Why? Ephesians 5:27 says "so that she might be holy and without blemish." As Christ gave himself up for the church that he may present her "to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish," the husband is to do in regard to his wife.

The husband is to lead his wife with selfless, unconditional love that is manifested by his actions toward her, that he may present her holy and without blemish before God.

Colossians 3:19 says,

> 19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

The Greek word for harsh could also be translated make bitter or to embitter (literally or figuratively). The idea is to cause one to feel anger, hurt or resentment because of unjust treatment. The husband is not to do this to his wife.

It seems to me that Paul is really stating the obvious here. Perhaps he does so to even more strongly make his point, or perhaps because men are dull and need to have the obvious pointed out to them. Why do I say this?

Well, first Paul says husbands are to love their wives. We said this love is a selfless, unconditional love that goes as far as the husband emptying himself, taking the form of a servant and giving himself up for his wife as Christ did for the church, so that he may present her holy and without blemish before God.

(Bible quotes from ESV unless otherwise noted)

It just doesn't compute that a husband who truly loves his wife as Christ loved the church could also be harsh so as to cause his wife to feel anger, hurt and resentment because of unjust treatment. For a husband to truly love his wife as Christ did the church and also to treat her harshly is an oxymoron. Both cannot possibly be true at the same time.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 describes how love manifests itself, and is certainly true for how a husband should love his wife.

> [4] Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant [5] or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; [6] it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. [7] Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

It is no wonder this passage is often read at weddings.

The relationship between a husband and a wife is one of the most beautiful and wonderful of all human relationships when it is first and foremost about Christ. Notice:

> Ephesians 5:22: "Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord."

> Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church.

Also, we must not forget that it all begins back in Ephesians 5:21 "submitting to one another." But how are we to submit to one another? Ephesians 5:21 continues, "out of reverence for Christ. This phrase, "out of reverence for Christ" is the foundation of the godly marriage and the godly home.

Children and Parents (3:20-21)

This brings us to the next relationship Paul will address in Colossians 3:20-21; the relationship between children and parents. The relationship between children and their parents is an important topic in the word of God. The fifth commandment, found in Deuteronomy 5:16, says,

> [16] "'Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

To honor means to treat with high respect, as for worth, merit, or rank.

Colossians 3:20-21 says,

(Bible quotes from ESV unless otherwise noted)

> [20] Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. [21] Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Here Paul uses a different word to describe the relationship of children to their parents compared to how he described the relationship of a husband and wife. He uses the word "obey." We will see the same word used again in verse 22 relating to the relationship of a bondservant to their earthly master.

The idea of the Greek word for "obey" is easy to understand and incorporates two ideas:

1. Listening: To hear under (as a subordinate). That is, to listen attentively. Proverbs 23:22 says, "Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old."
2. Obedience: To heed or conform to a command or authority.

Notice in Colossians 2:20 it says children are to obey their parents in "everything." Why? It says, "for this is pleasing to the Lord." Remember that the book of Colossians is written to believers. Here we are presupposing that we are talking about a Christian home. In that context, children are to obey their parents in everything. And, when they do so, it is pleasing to the Lord.

So, children are to listen attentively to their parents and to heed them in obedience.

Parents also have a responsibility in their relationship with their children. Colossians 3:21 goes on to say,

> [21] Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

The Greek word translated "fathers" here could mean parents, as it is translated in Hebrews 11:23, but in the historical context, it is more likely Paul is referring to the master of the household, the father. Either way, the principles from verse 21 apply to both parents.

The key to verse 21 is our understanding of the word provoke (erethizó (er-eth-id'-zo)). It means to stir up, arouse to anger, irritate, incite.

"To provoke" or "stir up" is to cause (someone) to feel a strong emotion and a desire to do something. In a negative sense to "stir up" is to cause (something, usually something bad or unpleasant) to happen. The idea is to stir up trouble. This is the sense in which it is being used in Colossians 3:21.

The parallel passage in Ephesians 6:4 adds to our understanding of what Paul is saying. Ephesians 6:4a,

(Bible quotes from ESV unless otherwise noted)

[4a] Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger.

John McArthur says, “Provoking our children to anger would suggest a repeated, ongoing pattern of treatment that gradually builds up a deep-seated anger and resentment that boils over in outward hostility.” (https://www.gty.org/library/articles/A325)

Then McArthur goes on suggest eight ways parents can provoke their children to anger. In summary, his helpfully suggested:

1. Well–meaning overprotection is a common cause of resentment in children. Parents who smother their children, overly restrict where they can go and what they can do, never trust them to do things on their own, and continually question their judgment build a barrier between themselves and their children—usually under the delusion that they are building a closer relationship. Children need careful guidance and certain restrictions, but they are individual human beings in their own right and must learn to make decisions on their own, commensurate with their age and maturity. Their wills can be guided but they cannot be controlled.

2. Another common cause of provoking children to anger is favoritism. For parents to compare their children with each other, especially in the children’s presence, can be devastating to the child who is less talented or favored. He will tend to become discouraged, resentful, withdrawn, and bitter.

3. A third way parents provoke their children is by pushing achievement beyond reasonable bounds. A child can be so pressured to achieve that he is virtually destroyed. He quickly learns that nothing he does is sufficient to please his parents.

4. A fourth way children are provoked is by discouragement. A child who is never complimented or encouraged by his parents is destined for trouble. If he is always told what is wrong with him and never what is right, he will soon lose hope and become convinced that he is incapable of doing anything right. At that point he has no reason even to try. Parents can always find something that a child genuinely does well, and they should show appreciation for it. A child needs approval and encouragement in things that are good every bit as much as he needs correction in things that are not.

5. A fifth way provocation occurs is by parents’ failing to sacrifice for their children and making them feel unwanted. Children who are made to feel that they are an intrusion, that they are always in the way and interfere with the plans and happiness of the parents, cannot help becoming resentful. To such children the

parents themselves will eventually become unwanted and an intrusion on the children's plans and happiness.

6. A sixth form of provocation comes from failing to let children grow up at a normal pace. Chiding them for always acting childish, even when what they do is perfectly normal and harmless, does not contribute to their maturity but rather helps confirm them in their childishness.

7. A seventh way of angering children is that of using love as a tool of reward or punishment—granting it when a child is good and withdrawing it when he is bad. Often the practice is unconscious, but a child can sense if a parent cares for him less when is he disobedient than when he behaves. That is not how God loves and is not the way he intends human parents to love. God disciplines His children just as much out of love as He blesses them. "Those whom the Lord loves He disciplines" (Heb. 12:6). Because it is so easy to punish out of anger and resentment, parents should take special care to let their children know they love them when discipline is given.

8. An eighth way to provoke children is by physical and verbal abuse. Battered children are a growing tragedy today. Even Christian parents—fathers especially—sometimes overreact and spank their children much harder than necessary. Proper physical discipline is not a matter of exerting superior authority and strength, but of correcting in love and reasonableness. Children are also abused verbally. A parent can as easily overpower a child with words as with physical force. Putting him down with superior arguments or sarcasm can inflict serious harm, and provokes him to anger and resentment. It is amazing that we sometimes say things to our children that we would not think of saying to anyone else—for fear of ruining our reputation!

Once again, we see that a relationship is not one sided. Both sides have roles and responsibilities in Christ centred relationships. Here Children are to obey their parents and parents are not to provoke their children lest they become discouraged.

Bondservants and Masters (3:22-25)

And finally, Paul addresses the relationship between bondservants and masters. Now, being very careful not to condone slavery in any form or in any time, it is important to take a moment to understand it in the context of the ancient world in which Paul was living when he wrote Colossians. Murray J. Harris explains,

(Bible quotes from ESV unless otherwise noted)

> "In the first century, slaves were not distinguishable from free persons by race, by speech or by clothing; they were sometimes more highly educated than their owners and held responsible professional positions; some persons sold themselves into slavery for economic or social advantage; they could reasonably hope to be emancipated after ten or twenty years of service or by their thirties at the least; they were not denied the right of public assembly and were not socially segregated (at least in the cities); they could accumulate savings to buy their freedom; their natural inferiority was not assumed." (Murray Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ*, NSBT (IVP, 44))

At the height of the Roman Empire in the mid second century AD, some have estimated that the total slave population may have approached 10 million people, or approximately 1/6 of the population as a whole.

Warren Wiersbe writes:

> "Slavery was an established institution in Paul's day. There were sixty million people in the Roman Empire, and many of them were well-educated people who carried great responsibilities in the homes of the wealthy. In many homes, the slaves helped to educate and disciple the children.
>
> Paul was careful to instruct Christian slaves to secure their freedom if they could (1 Corinthians 7:21), but he did not advocate rebellion or the overthrow of the existing order."

Wiersbe goes on to say,

> "Something of note: The purpose of the church was to spread the gospel and win souls, not to get involved in social action. Had the first Christians been branded as an antigovernment sect, they would have been greatly hindered in their soul winning and their church expansion." (Be Complete (Colossians), Warren Wiersbe, p. 144, 145)

Now it was not unheard of in Paul's time for believers to also be slave owners. We see this in Paul's letter to Philemon. Paul begins his letter to Philemon in verses 1-3 saying,

> [1b] To Philemon our beloved fellow worker [2] and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:
> [3] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then in verses 4-5 Paul goes on to say,

(Bible quotes from ESV unless otherwise noted)

> 4 I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, 5 because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints.

So, it is clear that Philemon is a believer in Christ. Paul then goes on to discuss Philemon's runaway slave Onesimus. Onesimus had made his way to Paul while he was in prison, heard the gospel, and had become a believer. Paul, knowing that Onesimus is Philemon's runaway slave, is now sending him back to his master. In verse 10 Paul says,

> 10 I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.

Then in verses 15-16 Paul explains,

> 15 For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, 16 no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

If you read through Paul's letter to Philemon, you will not find anywhere where Paul rebukes him for being a slave owner. This was a very normal part of the society in the Roman Empire at that time.

With that background, let's look at what Paul is saying in Colossians 3:22-4:1,

> 22 Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, 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 justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

Remember, in the context of the passage we have been studying, starting in Colossians 3:18, Paul has been providing instructions for the Christian household. Now as we move on to the discussion of bondservants and masters, Paul is still addressing the Christian household. So, both the bondservants and masters, in this context, are fellow believers.

The word translated "bondservant" in verse 22 is doulos (doo'-los) and means slave, one who gives himself up wholly to another's will. In verses 22 to 25 Paul is giving

(Bible quotes from ESV unless otherwise noted)

instructions to believing slaves for how they should conduct themselves in carrying out the will of their masters. First Paul says “obey in everything those who are your earthly masters.” “Obey” is the same word we looked at a moment ago when we discussed children and parents. It simply means:

1. Listening: To hear under (as a subordinate), and
2. Obedience: To heed or conform to a command or authority.

Like the children were to obey their parents in everything, the slave was to obey their earthly master in everything. But Paul provides more detail for the slave, as to what their obedience is to entail. He says, “not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.”

In other words, they are not only to obey when their masters are watching them in order to gain favour, but they are to obey all of the time, whether they are being watched or not. “Sincerity of heart” means to serve with singleness of heart, not being self-seeking and with mental honesty. And they were to do this “fearing the Lord.” Ephesians 6:5 says they were to obey “with a sincere heart, as you would Christ.” Ephesians 6:6 says they were to serve as “bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”

So even though they were slaves serving an earthly master, they were to serve in the same manner in which they would serve Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. Colossians 3:23-24 basically says the same thing,

> [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.

Paul ends his instruction to slaves with a warning in verse 25, “For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.”

Since slavery is not the norm where we live, so often the principles we have just discussed are related to an employee in order to provide some contemporary applications. I don’t know if all the principles can simply be applied in this way, but certainly the employee can benefit from the spirit of Paul’s instructions to slaves. For sure believing employees should do their jobs with sincerity of heart whether they are being watched or not. And there is no question they should do their jobs as for the Lord.

Next time, when we get into Colossians 4, we will see in verse 3 that we are to “walk in wisdom toward outsiders [i.e. those outside of Christ], making the best use of our time.” An employee who is a believer can have a very effective ministry of outreach by being a faithful, hardworking, trustworthy worker. Everyone should serve, whether at work or in

(Bible quotes from ESV unless otherwise noted)

other areas of life, in the same manner in which they would serve Christ, [doing] the will of God from the heart.

Now as we move to Colossians 4:1 we see that Paul addresses earthly masters,

> [1] Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

In the parallel passage in Ephesians 6:9 Paul gives more detail,

> [9] Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Earthy masters are to treat their slaves in the same manner as Paul just instructed the slaves to serve their masters, with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

"justly" means right and equitable, just, in the eyes of God.

"fairly" means equality of treatment

Masters are accountable to the same God as are slaves and are, therefore, held to the same standards of righteousness and obedience that God requires of all believers.

Once again, it would be encouraged for believing employers to apply these same principles in exercising authority over their employees, though this is not the specific situation Paul is addressing. Both employees and employers can learn from what Paul is teaching slaves and masters as they seek to "do the will of God from the heart rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man" (Ephesians 6:6b-7).

Conclusion

As we have looked at the household today, we have seen that a wife is to submit to her husband. However, that submission is not to be forced on a wife by a demanding husband but the wife is to willingly submit to her husband in the same way she is to submit to the Lord.

But note that the husband-and-wife relationship is NOT one way. It is not only about the wife submitting to her husband. It is also about the husband emptying himself, taking the form of a servant, and giving himself up for his wife, as Christ did for the church. The husband is to lead his wife with selfless, unconditional love that is manifested by his actions toward her, that he may present her holy and without blemish before God.

(Bible quotes from ESV unless otherwise noted)

Children are to listen attentively to their parents and to heed them in obedience. While parents are not to provoke their children to anger, rather, as we read in Ephesians 6:4, they are to "bring them up in the disciple and instruction of the Lord."

Slaves are to listen attentively to their masters and to heed them in obedience whether they are being watched or not. They are to do so with sincerity of heart, as to the Lord. The same applies to masters who are ultimately accountable to their Master in heaven. Though Paul was not addressing employees and employers, there are certainly many of the principles Paul provided for slaves and masters that employees and employers would be prudent to apply.

As we said when we began our study of the Christian household today, the family is, in many ways, the most important relationship in our human lives. Warren Wiersbe says, "As goes the home, so goes society and the nation." (Be Complete (Colossians), Warren Wiersbe, p. 139)

Let's seek to establish faithful godly homes, following the instruction that Paul has so clearly laid out for us, where our focus is not on self but on serving the Lord with a right heart.

(Bible quotes from ESV unless otherwise noted)