

The Places We Will Go - Colossians 3:17-4:1

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[0 : 00] And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything and do it not only when their eyes are on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters. Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward, it is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism. Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a master in heaven. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word made available to us so easily in our language. Thank you for your servant, Alan, for his service to us as a church family this past summer. Thank you for the work and the preparation that has gone into this morning's message. We pray that you would bless him by your words as he grapples with us day in and day out. Help him to speak clearly now to us as one who is speaking your very words. Help us to listen well and to engage and to be challenged by your word, so that we will go out as not just hearers of your words, but as doers.

So bless us, we pray as we listen and go out and live it out. In Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, Alan.

[2 : 28] Well, good morning. It's a pleasure to be here again this morning. We get close to wrapping up the book of Colossians here, the epistle of Colossians. Like we said last week, we are heading into the end of the letter where Paul is just getting very practical in his teaching here.

And last week he showed us that our whole life as Christians is really a response to everything that God has done for us through Christ.

We saw that really we respond to the gospel in lives of worship, in song, in word, and in deed. And then in verse 17, we ended there and we said that would kind of start us off today.

So verse 17 says, Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Now, I don't know about you, but when I get to verse 17, I'm really ready to do anything that God has for me to do.

And I'm a bit adventurous. I'm a bit of a, you give me the challenge, Lord, I'll get after it. And so I imagine if I were sitting there listening to Paul, he were to say, are you ready to do anything?

[3 : 44] I'd say, yeah, I'm ready, Paul. He'd say, okay, are you sure? Absolutely. And I would be thinking big thoughts. And Paul would say, okay, here's what I want you to do.

I want you to go home, okay? I want you to go to work, okay? And then Paul would just stare at me. I'd say, no, Paul, keep going.

Because here's the thing, Paul, I'm an American, so I'm a pioneer. I'm an adventurous guy. I'm going to go explore. I'm going to take over the world, Paul, so tell me what to do. And he says, yes, Alan, go home. I can do that.

And then go to work, absolutely. And I think Paul would say, what are you waiting for? Go home and go to work. And it's interesting because sometimes we read Scripture and we get these thoughts that I'm going to go serve God in word and deed and anything I do, it's going to be for the Lord and He's going to call me to something and it's going to be this big, huge thing.

And Paul says, here's the big, huge thing I want you to do. I want you to go home and go to work and glorify God in doing so. Why would Paul start here?

[4 : 55] Why would he call us as believers to respond to all that God has done by going home and going to work? Well, note a few things here.

These are some of the most time-consuming, and I don't mean that in a negative sense, but these are the most time-consuming relationships in our lives. This is where we spend our most time, at home and at work.

These are some of the most sensitive relationships in our lives. And really, these are the nuts and bolts of our life as we spend a lot of time and a lot of energy and a lot of thought at home and at work.

And so Paul kind of says, this is a bit of the litmus test, if you will, of everything that he's taught so far in the book of Colossians. The degree to which the gospel has really taken root in our lives is seen first and foremost at home and at work.

And so here's what I want to do today. I want to look at those two parts of our life, and I want to look at three things. The ideal, what it should look like according to Scripture.

[5 : 58] And then the real, the reality of what this looks like, and our hope for redemption, our hope for renewal. The ideal, the real, and our hope for renewal. So first, the ideal home. Paul gives us verses 18 through 21.

And then he says, It starts with wives submitting themselves to their husbands as is fitting in the Lord. It gets really quiet when a preacher says that.

I've noticed that. I've preached this type of passage a few times, and every woman's got the same look right now. And every man's trying really hard not to grin. But it really says right there, wives submitting themselves to the husbands as is fitting in the Lord.

And I'll be honest, I don't like that word submit. And I don't know many people that like that word submit. The ladies, I tried hard to look for different translations. I looked at all the different, how else can we interpret this word?

It says, here's an option. Willingly enter into a submissive relationship with someone. Well, that doesn't sound any better. Subject yourself to the authority of someone. Or subordinate yourself. Those are the options.

[7 : 02] It really means submit. Submit. Submit yourselves to your husbands. Now I want to point out what this does not say. It does not say, women, submit yourselves to men.

It doesn't say that. You might hear that argued, but that's not what it says. It's talking about one wife submitting herself to one husband as is fitting in the Lord. It does not say, obey.

Notice that. It's going to say, for children and slaves, obey. It doesn't say that for the wife. It says, to submit herself to the Lord as is fitting, or to her husband as is fitting in the Lord, or proper.

And our example is Christ in the garden on the night of His betrayal. He says, Father, please take this cup from me. Speaking of the cross. He says, yet not my will, or not my plan, but yours be done.

Showing us an example of perfect submission. And then Paul says, this is to be coupled with perfect love by the husband. Verse 19 says, Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

[8 : 14] He says, husbands, have a warm regard for, take pleasure and cherish, show affection to your wives. And he says, do not be harsh. That's an interesting way of translating that actually, because you could also say, the translation could read, do not make them bitter or sour.

The only other time we get this phrase in Scripture is Revelation 10.9, where John is given a scroll to put on his mouth, and he's told, at first it will taste really sweet like honey, but then it will turn sour in your stomach.

It will make you bitter. It will be harsh on you. Paul says, men, we are not to sour our wives. We are not to make them become bitter.

The opposite actually is what we're supposed to do. We're supposed to love our wives and cause them to blossom. Again, our example is Christ himself. In a parallel passage in Ephesians 5, Paul says, husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church.

In the same way that Christ loved the church, men are called to love their wives. In the way that he gave himself up for her. Cleansing her. To present her holy and blameless.

[9 : 30] That's how we're called to love our wives. And so this first relationship that Paul sets up in this ideal sense of a man who loves his wife the way that Christ loved the church, and a lady who submits to her husband in the way that the Lord Christ submitted to the Father by going to the

cross.

This, Paul says, is the ideal Christian marriage. This is part of responding to what God has done. Ladies, submitting to your husband. Husbands, loving your wives.

Then to that, Paul adds children obeying their parents. And fathers encouraging their children.

Verses 20-21. Children, children obey your parents in everything.

For this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

And the opposite of discouraging a child is to encourage them.

And Christ is our example once again as he both obeys his earthly parents as well as his heavenly Father. I find it interesting that scriptures say Jesus obeyed his earthly parents.

[10:39] If any child ever had the right to stand up to mom and dad and say, I have a different idea, it's God incarnate. And yet he obeyed his parents.

Children, you really are called to obey your parents. Even adults, we're still children, aren't we? We still have parents. In the same way, Christ, he encourages, you could say, he shepherds his disciples.

He encourages them. He trains them up. He's so patient. He's so loving. You don't ever get a sense in the Gospels of Jesus being harsh with his disciples. Even though we read it and we're going, come on guys.

Get with the program. Jesus is so patient with them. He's so encouraging. And Paul says, this is what the Christian home should look like. Husbands loving their wives.

Wives submitting to their husbands. Children obeying. Fathers encouraging. Well, what more could one ask for? Paul says, how about, how about once you've done that at home, then go to work and create the ideal work environment.

[11:44] We say, well, what does a Christ-centered work environment look like? He tells us, first of all, in verses 22 through 25, he says, slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything. Now, if we bring that into today's context, we would say, employees and employers would be the language which we would use.

Employees, obey your employers in everything. Not only when their eye is on you. And not just to curry their favor. But with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

Again, our example is found in Christ who in John 17 says to the Father, I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.

Christ is the perfect servant who obeys in everything. And then it says, employers, do what is right and fair. In chapter 4, verse 1.

Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair because you know that you also have a Master in heaven. And again, we look to Christ, our example, in 1 John 2. It says that He is our advocate with the Father.

[12:52] He is the righteous one. The one who is right and fair. So Paul says, employers, treat your employees like Jesus treated us. Or maybe you're not an employer, but you have someone who works under you.

It says to treat that person in a righteous way. And so we have the ideal home and we have the ideal work environment. And Paul has brought us all the way to this point where he says, everything you do in word and in deed, do it to the Father, for the Son, in the name of the Father, giving thanks.

And we say, okay, tell us what that is. And he says, go home and go to work and live lives like this.

And we do have to feel the weight of that because that really is the command in Scripture.

There's no linguistic gymnastics I can do to get us out of that. That's really commanded by Paul.

And yet there's a reason why Paul has to command these things, isn't there?

These aren't natural to us. This is not the reality we live in. And so we have to look at the reality of where we're at. And we just have to be honest with how these relationships really are right now.

[14:12] We also have to recognize the effect that the fall has had on each of these relationships.

When we look at marriage, we see in Genesis 3.16, as part of the curse, God says, your desire, ladies, your desire will be contrary to, or your desire will be to master your husbands.

And he will lord over you. See, part of the effects of the fall is that for ladies, it's not natural to want to submit to your husband. It's natural to want to get over him and lord over him.

And it's not natural for him to just love you the way Christ has loved the church. It's more natural for him to lord over you. And men, we go from Eve being flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone to that

woman you gave me.

And we see right away in the fall this fracture in marriage. If you keep reading into Genesis 4, it gets worse in verse 19 where it says, Lamech, he takes two wives.

I think that language is interesting. It goes from one man and one woman to now this man who will take two wives. If you look at their names, it's even more interesting. Their names mean my ornament and my shade.

[15:28] So we've gone from a helpmate who God has created to be one man and one woman in this beautiful relationship to women wanting to lord over their husbands or master their husbands and men just saying, I will take wives and I'll make them my ornament and my shade.

And the marriage relationship is fractured deeply by sin. If we're honest, we can admit and we have to admit that our marriages today are built on centuries of domination and manipulation.

Centuries of misunderstanding and warfare between men and women. Two sinners plunged into a lifelong struggle. You say, how come my spouse is this way because they're a sinner just like you. And so we have a woman fighting her sin nature and we have a man fighting his sin nature trying to glorify God in this marriage. What about parenting? What does it really look like to parent in a fallen world?

We see right away Cain kills Abel. We see very soon Noah's son Ham shaming him. Even King David's son Absalom commits treason against his father.

[16:43] That one always blows my mind. Your dad is King David. How great would that be? But Absalom commits treason against him. Why do all these children sin and obey?

Or sin and disobey? Why do your children sin and disobey? Have you ever thought of that? Sometimes I think why would my child sin? And then I'm reminded because they're my child.

They've gotten the same curse that we have on us. The reality is it's very difficult to father and mother children and it's very difficult for children to obey their parents because of the fall.

The reality today is in the U.S. and the United States an average of five children per day are killed because of child abuse. Five children a day because of child abuse in the home.

That's a home that looks nothing like what God's called it to be because of sin. We say these are the non-Christian homes. The Christian homes are much better. We have to be careful there, don't we?

[17:48] I don't always agree with the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard but I have to agree with him on this point. He says the worst thing in the world for a child is not that the child should have a secular atheist parent.

He says that's not the worst thing. He says the worst thing in the world is for a child to have a father and I think he's speaking about his father here he says for a child to have a father or mother who profess all the orthodoxies of Christianity yet plainly live lives that do not show that they trust in God.

He says that is far more devastating to any child than having a secular atheistic parent. God creates children in his image and he entrusts his children to our cares as parents and again if we're honest with ourselves we fail to recognize how sinful they are and how hard it is for them to obey and we fail to recognize how discouraging we can be towards our children.

And this is the reality of our homes today sinners leading sinners sinners born to sinners sinners wondering why their offspring are sinful. what about our jobs what is it what is it like to work in a fallen world?

There's a very interesting book called Working by a man named Studs Terkel that's the greatest name I think I've ever heard Studs Terkel in the introduction he says this I find it fascinating he says this book being about work is by its very nature about violence to the spirit as well to the body.

[19:21] He says work is about ulcers and accidents shouting matches and fist fights work is about nervous breakdowns and kicking the dog around it is above all or perhaps beneath it all about daily humiliation for some to survive the day is triumph enough for the walking wounded among the great many of us.

He says that's life in the work world that's life at work in a fallen world. And I know that sounds terrible and you think well that's probably just the United States we all know Americans work way too hard and they live to work instead of working to live I've heard that so many times.

Interestingly enough BBC News ran an article just last week that said burnout is rising in the land of work-life balance. And they go to Sweden of all places the place known for promoting the balanced

lifestyle and they show in their article how burnout is just on the rise in Sweden.

So even the places on planet earth where we're most balanced the work environment is brutal to us. And that's the reality of life on planet earth.

And so we have the ideal world that Paul has called us to the ideal marriage and the ideal parenting and the ideal work environment and then we can look at reality and I don't think we have to press too much harder to recognize our marriages aren't ideally what they should be our parenting isn't what it should be and our work life isn't what it should be and so then we have to pause and ask how are we supposed to do this Paul?

[21 : 01] How are we really supposed to pull this off? How do we go from real to ideal? What is our hope for renewal? What Paul says he says the key to our hope is found in this word that's repeated seven times in this passage and that's this word Lord.

Turn with me again and look at verse 17. Whatever you do whether in word or deed do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Wives submit to your husbands verse 18 as is fitting and proper in the Lord.

Verse 20 Children obey your parents and everything for this pleases the Lord. verse 22 Slaves obey your earthly masters in everything with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

Verse 23 Whatever you do work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord. Verse 24 Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as reward it is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Seven times he uses that word Lord and then he finishes off in chapter 4 verse 1 by referring to our master in heaven. And so what's Paul's aim here?

[22 : 13] What's he doing? Why is he all of a sudden just throwing this word Lord out seven times so quickly? He says our example is Christ and our only hope for renewal is to recognize that he is our example and he is where our power comes from.

Our example and the ability to go from real to ideal is found in our Lord Jesus Christ himself. And you say well how do we actually do that?

How do we actually live out these relationships under Christ's lordship? It's to look at who he is and what he's done. And what Paul's doing is he's echoing you can make this note Psalm 130 verse 4 which just simply says with God there is forgiveness so that we can with reverence serve him.

With God there is forgiveness so that we can serve him with reverence. And so first Paul says first we look to we look to the cross and we see both our faults and the other person's struggles.

We admit and empathize. We look to the cross and we see both our faults and our spouses children's parents co-workers struggles. Why did Christ have to die for each of these people groups?

[23 : 32] Because all have sinned in each of these roles. husbands and so we need to admit our shortcomings in this. We have to own our part. Husbands we have to admit to our wives I haven't loved you very well and I'm probably really hard to submit to.

Men I would challenge you to say that to your wife. Say I recognize I'm probably really hard to submit to. And she in grace will try not to smile or laugh out loud and she'll just you know thank you honey is what you'll get.

And then ladies you can look at your husband and say you know what I haven't submitted to you well I could probably be hard to love it sometimes. And many say no absolutely not it's just all me. But we can admit that we haven't done well in these roles. And we can empathize with the other person and say why is it so hard for my wife to submit to me because I'm probably not loving her very well.

And wives can say why isn't he loving me very well maybe I'm not submitting like I should. And you can look at your children and say why aren't they obeying me? And you can probably think about when you're a child and go man I was a bit of a rascal myself wasn't I?

[24 : 47] And fathers you can look at your children and when they do those things that get you just about to get angry you can go I've done the same both to my parents and to my father in heaven.

We can admit how we've fallen short and then we can look at our children and we can love and encourage them and say you know what don't just obey me because I'm perfect because I'm not perfect. Obey me because God's called you to and he's the one that we're obeying.

We tell our kids all the time we know we're not perfect parents. At some point we know that they're going to go hey my mom and dad weren't perfect. We say yeah we'll admit that right now. We'll call

the ball on that.

When you have that thought yes that's true but we love you and we're trying but God loves you even more. And you don't just obey us for the sake of obeying us you obey us because that's what God's called you to do.

But we look to the cross and we see our shortcomings we admit those shortcomings and then we can empathize with others. We can look at our boss and say well that person drives me crazy and then we can think about our master in heaven and say I drove him to the cross.

[25 : 51] so we admit and we empathize and then secondly we see where Christ was perfect and we admire his sacrifice.

We see where Christ was perfect and we admire his sacrifice and this is one of the beauties of the gospel is his righteousness is now ours and his sacrifice complete.

See Jesus is the one who perfectly submits to the father and then dies for the unsubmitive. He's one who perfectly loves and then dies for the unloving husband.

Christ is one who perfectly obeys and then dies for the disobedient child. He's one who perfectly serves and then dies for us the lazy wicked servants.

He is our perfectly righteous master in heaven and yet while we were still sinners Christ died for us. See Christianity says if you truly want to change then you have to set your eyes on our perfect example over and over again.

[27 : 00] You have to have your mind renewed in the knowledge of who Christ is and what he has done. And we have to have our affections stirred by the one who has done everything we have failed to do and then credited that perfection to our account.

And that changes a person. See, men, when you look at your wife, yes, you see this beautiful lady who's created in God's image, but you also recognize how far we've fallen and yet how Christ has died for us, His bride.

Wives, when you think of submitting to your husband, you think of your Lord and Savior who in the garden shed sweat like blood and yet submitted to the Father.

God's who loved perfectly, who submitted perfectly and imputed that to our account. And when you get up tomorrow morning to go to work and you think of the people I have to work for, you can recognize Christ was the perfect servant who's imputed that service to our account and who's paid the price in full for all of our shortcomings.

And so we admit and we empathize and we see where Christ was perfect and we admire His sacrifice and then finally we submit to Christ's lordship and we trust His sovereignty.

[28 : 25] We submit to His lordship and we trust His sovereignty. He will see us through and He will be glorified. And this is why Paul used that word seven times, Lord, and then Master in Heaven.

See, there's a certain amount of faith required in trusting that we aren't just submitting to our husbands but to Christ our Lord. That we aren't just obeying our parents for their pleasure but for the Lord's.

We aren't just serving our masters on earth but we are serving the Lord our Master in Heaven who served so perfectly for us. See, as we live life under Christ's lordship, He will see us through and He will be glorified as He continually conforms us to His image.

And so we strive. We absolutely strive to obey the commands in this passage to go from the reality of where our marriages and our parenting and our work relationships are.

We strive to go to the ideal where they're supposed to be, where they're commanded to be. While we do that, we recognize where we fall short. We admit and we empathize.

[29 : 39] We look to the cross. We see the penalty for these failures being paid in full and then we submit to Christ's lordship all over again, day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year, in word and in deed, at home and at work.

Let's pray. Father, we come to you people who live in a broken, fallen world.

We take comfort in knowing that even as we call out to you in prayer that you can relate to what we're going through because you've lived life in this world. We know that you submitted perfectly at great cost.

We know that you've loved us perfectly at great cost. We see how you obey your Father in heaven and we long to obey like that.

We long to serve you. We long to be righteous like you. We thank you that on one hand you have credited your perfect life to us and on the other hand we deeply apologize that it cost you your life.

[30 : 54] would you help us Lord to fulfill these commands? Would you help us to live the lives you've called us to live? Would you help the ladies as they fight their sin nature to submit to imperfect husbands?

Would you help the men as they fight their sin nature to love their wives the way you've loved us?

Would you help the children Lord to obey as they are called to obey and please you? Lord would you help us as parents as we strive to encourage our children in the way they should go?

Would you help us this afternoon at home and would you help us tomorrow as we go to work?

Would you help us to do our best for you our master in heaven?

Would you help us to work hard not just when someone's watching but at all times knowing that we serve you the God who has served us beyond any way we could have ever imagined?

help us Lord as we go from real to ideal keep our eyes fixed on Jesus in his name we pray amen I invite you to stand with me as we'll sing Jesus my all in all as we head towards the Lord's table and there's just that line you are my strength when I am weak for you and just myself or else we can find a way to opportunity for me and work the same for me to be able to have no lunch yet as we'll be able to you to be able to who I am to Paul Nutella