

Relationships in Christ

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[0:00] Colossians chapter 3 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.

Wives, submit 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 provoke your children lest they become discouraged. Slaves, 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.

Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ, for the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a master in heaven.

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it, with thanksgiving.

[1:21] At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison, that I may make it clear which is how I ought to speak.

Walk in wisdom towards outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, and with him, Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you.

They will tell you of everything that has taken place here. Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions.

If he comes to you, welcome him, and Jesus, who is called Justice. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

[2:43] Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you in always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician, greets you, as does Demas.

Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea and to Nympha and the church in our house. And, when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans, and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea, and say to Archippus, see that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. My name is Andy Meadows.

I'm the Youth and Children's Minister here at Grace Church. It's great to see you. Please do turn back to Colossians on 1185. Ordinary has to be one of the loneliest words in the English language.

[4:06] Who wants to hear at the next parents' evening that your child is ordinary? Who wants to share snippets of their ordinary life on social media? Which political party will describe their election manifesto as ordinary?

Which company will advertise their products as ordinary? Instead, we prefer innovative, extraordinary, transformative, high-octane.

We see adverts for products that will take our life to the next level. And as we've seen in our time in Colossians, the attraction of the extraordinary over the ordinary is dangerous in the Christian faith. If you remember, the false teachers of the day were essentially saying to the Colossians, you've started really well with Jesus. But to take your faith to the next level, this is what you need. You need more of these spiritual experience, rituals, and rules. But Paul says such actions are empty and deceptive.

[5:18] And his key message is summarised in chapter 2, verses 6 and 7. Scan back with me. Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

In other words, as we've said before, the way in the Christian faith is also the way on. Progress and maturity is not found in special religious rituals, rules, visions, experiences, but in the everyday, ordinary life of living with Jesus as Lord.

So we've got a handout on the back of our service sheet. We only have one really big point this morning, with three sub-points, but it's one big point. And it's a summary of the whole of Colossians. We go on maturing in the Christian life by living with Jesus as Lord over ordinary, everyday life. You see, just as before these verses, Paul refers to Jesus as Christ.

But now, from verse 17 onwards, Paul refers to Jesus as Lord, in charge, the boss. Now, so look down, verse 17. Do everything in the name of the Lord.

[6:51] Verse 18. As is fitting in the Lord. Verse 20. For this pleases the Lord. End of verse 22. Fearing the Lord. Verse 23.

Work heartily as for the Lord. Verse 24. You are serving the Lord Christ. It's not hard to work out Paul's main point.

He's repeated it often enough. He's spelling out that Jesus is Lord over all life. That fits with what he's already said in chapter 1.

There, Paul gave us a glorious picture of Jesus' supremacy and lordship. So chapter 1, verse 16, that we've referred to already.

All things created through him and by him and for him. Verse 17. He's before all things. And in all things in him hold together.

[7:47] Verse 18. He's the head of the church, but also supreme over everything. Abraham Kuyper was the prime minister of the Netherlands and a theologian at the beginning of the 20th century.

And he said this. There is not a square inch in the whole human existence over which Christ does not cry, mine. Jesus is Lord of all life.

So there is no secular, sacred divide. Being in Christ, rooted and established in him, is not just for Sundays, but for how I live at home, at work, and in every social interaction throughout the week. Over all of life, Jesus cries, mine. And so, firstly, Paul says how to continue with Jesus as Lord at home.

Have a look down at verse 18. Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Now, that verse is as far away from Germaine Greer and Emma Watson as you could possibly get.

[9:05] It lands very hard on our 21st century ears. Now, Paul is referring to the pattern of marriage that runs all the way through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

Now, we haven't got time to unpack it all now, but please do listen online on our church websites to the talks in Ephesians 5 and 6 that were last year to think about that more.

But we can't get away from the fact that it does land with a thud, that verse. It doesn't sound appealing. But the motivation to live this way is at the start of chapter 3 that we looked at last week. In verses 1 to 4, someone who has put their trust in Jesus has been raised with him. They are in Christ, seated in heaven. And so, when it's hard to do this, a Christian wife can say, Christ is my life, I am in heaven.

And from that position of status and equality, I will put myself under my husband's leadership because it is fitting in the Lord.

[10:20] the balancing command to this is given in verse 19. Have a look down at that. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

Again, if you think husbands are let off the hook here, please do read and listen to those talks in Ephesians 5 again. Love is not the easy option. A husband's commitment is that they are ready to die for their wife as Jesus died for the church.

To put his wife first in every instance and every decision. So, do you want to make progress in the Christian life?

Do you want the rich, full, heavenly experience of being in Christ? Well, if we are married, wives, submit to your husbands. husbands, husbands, love your wives.

It's not flashy. It's not super spiritual. But this is the everyday, heavenly experience of being in Christ. Walking in him.

[11:27] Living with him as Lord. Paul then applies the same pattern to children and parents. So if you're part of the youth group and you've zoned out, listen up.

Verse 20. Children, obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord. Children aren't looked down on but are addressed as followers of the Lord Jesus in their own right.

A Christian child, teenager, is seated in heaven, united to Christ. And they lose no dignity or worth when they go to bed when they're told.

Now this is actually a shocking verse in the 21st century. Our modern society puts the child at the heart of everything. It's the highest place in the family.

The person to target in advertising to bring the money in. Especially at Christmas. And yet Paul says, obey your parents in everything.

[12:33] So yes, parents really can tell their children what time to come home. what to wear. What you can and can't watch and who you go out with.

And when that is hard, the Christian child and teenager can think back to chapter 3 verses 1 to 4. And they say, Jesus is my life.

I am in him. I am seated in heaven already. And so, I will obey my parents because that pleases the Lord.

At the same time, again, the balancing command, verse 21, fathers, do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged.

Growing up, I used to watch a comedy sketch show where one of the characters was called Competitive Dad. He beats his children at everything and he's constantly putting them down. So heckling his young son in the school play, shouting out, you're rubbish.

[13:33] Or smashing them at Monopoly all the time. And there's one bit when the child brings a bit of artwork home, smiling, he's really young, he's about seven, brings it to his dad and his dad describes it as adequate.

Maybe you can identify with that. But that is not verse 21, is it? Parents, we are to make it easy for our children to obey us by being supportive, not winding them up or looking down on their efforts by not having random rules.

So parents can tell their children what to wear, who to see, but it doesn't mean they always should. You see, the aim is to have children who are encouraged and ultimately children who are rooted and built up in Jesus.

So again, do you want to make progress in a Christian life? Do you want the rich, full, heavenly experience of being in Christ? Children, obey your parents in everything.

Fathers, do not provoke your children. It looks ordinary, but it is heavenly. Paul then moves swiftly on to thinking about the slave and master relationship.

[14:59] Now just before we get there, we must acknowledge that slavery is an evil and it continues to be an evil today. In 1 Timothy chapter 1, Paul includes slave trading as a sin.

So Paul doesn't condone slavery. Nonetheless, he does say, Christian slave, in the tough situation you find yourself in, this is how you live with Jesus as Lord.

I know the parallel to us isn't exact, but if Paul can tell a slave what to do, who works for nothing, how much then can he tell us who get paid for our work how we should live at work?

So we can apply what Paul says to the workplace. So Jesus is Lord at work. The best bit of career advice the Bible gives is in verse 23 and then again in verse 24.

In verse 23, whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.

[16:11] You are serving the Lord Christ. Whatever job we have, we are serving Christ. We are ultimately working for him.

That is incredibly liberating. If you have the most demeaning job in the world, if you have a boss who is a pain in the neck and of course I would have no experience of how that feels at all.

But your boss really is the Lord of the universe. You cannot get a higher status than that. You are united with him. And so perhaps some of us are thinking of changing jobs or thinking what career to do as I leave school.

Well can we see that wherever we work we change jobs, career change, our boss is always the same. And what matters more than the job we do is how we do it.

Working in a heavenly way. So verse 22, not by way of eye service as people please but with sincerity of heart fearing the Lord.

[17:24] Think back to your school days. the teacher steps out of the room. How long does it take for the class to stop working? Three, maybe four seconds, I don't know.

The pen goes down, the phone comes out, the chat starts. Does much change in the workplace now? I wonder. How much internet shopping would you do or how much time would you spend on social media if your boss was standing right behind you?

I guess this is partly the reason why some offices have open plan offices. It costs in distraction but the general rule is because we don't work as heart when the boss isn't looking.

This is a great challenge for those of us, if you are like me, who work from home. We're on our own. Simon's not there standing over my shoulder watching me work. But Jesus is.

He is the boss. And I work for him. And if you're a Christian, whatever your job, so do you. That's an encouragement to work well with sincerity of heart, even when the teacher or the boss can't see you.

[18:36] Being more concerned for Jesus' appraisal than the workplace appraisal or the parents' evening. These verses do keep us from laziness at work.

But they also keep us from being a workaholic. You see, when we remember that we are working for the Lord and not for people ultimately, it keeps us from chasing the status and the praise from people that we might do from work.

Because we are already united to the Lord of the universe. We can't get much higher than that. people that do not. If you are not a Christian here this morning, you might not think this sounds that appealing, really.

But Paul paints a wonderful picture of what the Lord Jesus is like as a boss. Chapter 3, verse 13, we looked at last week. He is the ultimate forgiving boss.

Now, verse 24 of chapter 3, he is a boss who rewards. We have the best pay packet available, awaiting us in heaven in the future.

[19:47] And now, verse 25, he is the completely fair boss, the Lord of every industrial tribunal, and every injustice will be dealt with.

And so the slave at Colossae can be guaranteed that even the most evil slave master will not get away with it. Jesus is Lord. And so when work is hard, when we're feeling undervalued and underpaid perhaps, we can say, Christ is my life.

I am seated in heaven in him. I have the ultimate pay packet in the inheritance that is mine in the future. And so I can obey my boss knowing it is Jesus I am serving, and he is the ultimately good boss.

Lord, I am Lord. Perhaps you're on the other side of the desk, and you're a teacher, or you have people who answer to you. Well, the logic is the same.

Chapter 4, verse 1. Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a master in heaven.

[20:58] Jesus is still Lord, however high you climb up the ladder. and so employers and teachers should treat their workforce and students fairly,

with sincerity of heart, working for the Lord.

So again, do you want to make progress in the Christian faith? Do you want the rich, full, heavenly experience of being in Christ? Work heartily as for the Lord, and not for men.

Continue with Jesus as Lord of work. Paul then widens the scope further from our church family relationships last week to biological relationships, to work relationships, and now relationships with the whole world, everyone we come into contact with.

Colossians has been full of good news. Chapter 1, peace has been achieved between us and God, who the Lord Jesus Christ, if we turn and trust in him, we have been transferred from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of his son with the forgiveness of sins.

And now as people in Christ, filled with kindness, compassion, and love, we are to have a desire for the gospel to go out to the whole world.

[22:27] So verse 2 of chapter 4, continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray for us also, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison, that I may make it clear which is how I ought to speak.

I reckon lots of prisoners have asked for an open door, people. But Paul wants an open door not for his cell, but for the gospel. His desire is to declare the mystery of Christ, the gospel, even in prison, to the guards, to the fellow prisoners there.

Now Paul's time has been and gone on this earth, yet wonderfully the gospel continues to go out.

Our mission partners proclaiming the gospel in Ireland, Zambia, Streatham, Naples.

And so we are to continue to pray that God would open a door for the gospel. I was with a friend on Friday night and he told a group of us how he's planning to plant a church in Zimbabwe, really tough place.

And it's really encouraging to see his heart, his vision for the gospel reaching Zimbabwe. And so we are to continue to pray, pray for the gospel going out all over the world.

[23:53] And for here in Dulwich too. As we were thinking earlier about who to invite and how to invite for our Christmas services, pray that the door, that God would open a door for the gospel.

Paul goes on, he encourages the Colossians not just to pray for the gospel to go out, but to be a part of it in their personal gospel witness. Now verse five, walk in wisdom towards outsiders, making the best use of the time.

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. Unless you live on a desert island by yourself, the chances are that you know someone who is not yet a Christian, they haven't believed the good news of Jesus.

Well we are to be wise in how we act towards them, having the everyday mentality of commending the gospel in our words and our speech to all we come into contact with.

Making the best use of time gives us the image of a trader buying and selling, an eye for a deal, snapping up the opportunity when it comes along. Well we are to be gospel traders, having an eye for the gospel opportunity and snapping it up as it comes along.

[25:19] We know that one day Jesus will return and that day then informs this day and this week, living to share the gospel with others and praying.

Not trying to win arguments or saying what people want to hear, but full of gracious gospel speech. If you want to think more about what that looks like then I do commend to you the evangelism toolbox tomorrow night, please do speak to Jake about that.

So again, do you want to make progress in the Christian life? Do you want the rich, full, heavenly experience of being in Christ? Continue steadfastly in prayer.

Walk in wisdom towards outsiders. Continue with Jesus as Lord in everyday, ordinary life. as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in their faith.

It may look ordinary, yet it is anything but ordinary as we are united to Christ, seated in heaven and living this way may be radical in the world's eyes, but it will feel ordinary.

[26:44] I take it that's why Paul names drops all these people at the end. We haven't got time to look at this list of names. Well done Peter

for reading them all out and getting them right. But what is he doing here?

Why is he mentioning them all? I don't think he's trying to hit a word count or he's got space to fill on the parchment. But in the light of the false teachers pushing their rituals and special experiences, he is commending ordinary Christians living the ordinary Christian life, continuing with Jesus as Lord.

How is Tychicus described in verse seven? Faithful. He was the postman. His job was to deliver the letter.

That looked ordinary, carrying along a piece of paper. But humanly speaking, it's because of his ordinary walking with Jesus as Lord and continuing with him that we have the letters of Colossians and Philemon in our Bibles today.

And what does Paul have to say about Epaphras? If you remember from chapter one, he's the guy who set up the church in Colossians. Colossians, verse 12, Epaphras is praying.

[28:01] He is continuing steadfastly in prayer. And what does he pray? That the Colossians may stand mature and fully assured in the will of God. Nothing flashy, nothing super spiritual, but ordinary Christians living out the everyday Christian life, but through whom God is doing extraordinary things.

bringing the good news of Jesus to the world. So as we conclude our time in Colossians, we've had the tagline over and over again, a big summary of the book, and it's there on your handout.

Stick with Jesus, because Jesus is all you need. We have everything we need in him, everything to start the Christian life. we have the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and to continue the Christian life, because we are united to him.

We are seated at the right hand in heaven. So continue how you started, with Jesus as Lord in the ordinary, everyday life.

let's pray together. As you receive Christ, Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up, established in the faith.

[29:30] Heavenly Father, we thank you for the forgiveness of sins, and for peace with you through the Lord Jesus dying for us. pray that we would be continuing with him, that we would seek to put him as Lord of all our life, and that we would be rooted and built up in him.

Amen.