

Transformation from the inside out | Colossians

3:18-4:1

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[0 : 00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we're dedicated to encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. Located in Ontario, Oregon, Pastor Patrick Daly preaches insightful sermons from the Word of God, offering practical applications for modern living.

We're delighted to share this sermon with you. Jesus Christ offered the greatest sacrifice by paying for our sins on the cross.

And this was done by the love that God has for us, for God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

The sacrifice that the Lord made was for us, it was made for everyone. And because of this, when we believe in the Lord, we have everlasting life.

And to know that we are saved by grace through faith is remarkable. To know that we are secure in the arms of the Father is wonderful.

[1 : 10] The sacrifice made for us, it should be a call for us to hear the good news, to respond to the gospel message, to come to know the Lord and to grow in Him, and to be encouraged to do good in the name of Jesus Christ.

Because of Jesus Christ, His sacrifice, wouldn't you want to follow in the footsteps of Christ?

Wouldn't you want to leave the former life, the former things, and put on the new self?

The life that Christ offers is a better life. It is because of faith in Him that we become a new creation, and we are placed on a path to become transformed by the inner working, by the transformation that comes from God our Father, and to become better people in the eyes of God.

We are called to trust and obey so that we can become more like Him, so that we can become holy. When we set our minds on the things that are higher, and not the things that are lower, when we put on the new self and we let go of the former life and the former things, there is transformation that comes from the inside out.

God will transform our lives if we believe in Him and we follow in the footsteps of Christ. This transformation exists not only in who you are, but in your interactions with others, how you see the world, and even in your relationships, in your marriages, in your family, in the family context.

[3 : 04] Today, we are talking about how the Apostle Paul's, his mission in the early church, was to spread the good news of the Gospel.

And this was done in a time that was very different from our world today. Women, children, bond servants, and slaves, they were seen as property.

It was a very patriarchal society. And sadly, many of the verses that we will be going over today, they have been taken out of context, and they have been used to justify abuse and the mistreatment of women and of slaves throughout history.

And in order for us to properly understand these verses, we need to know the timeframe and the culture and the significance of Paul's letter to the Colossians.

As many of you know, Christianity was birthed in the time of the Roman Empire, a time where men, they were on a higher social status compared to women, children, and servants and slaves.

[4 : 16] The Colossian Church consisted of Gentiles, those who did not know the Lord, not at all. But they came to know the Lord through faith.

They once lived lives of sin or living a worldly, former life. They lived away from the Lord. And I mention all of this to help us to understand that many of these people, they lived in their culture, where it was commonplace, where if you were not a man, if you were a master, you were seen very differently.

That's the culture in which Paul is writing in. The Colossians, like many people of the time, again, they lived in a very patriarchal society. And what we're going to see today is the Apostle Paul is addressing wives, children, masters, husbands, fathers, servants and slaves.

What's very interesting, and I want to make it very clear here, Paul is not condoning the abuse of people. Instead, if he were to do that, he would only be addressing the men at the time.

And what's so remarkable is how he addresses each part of the family in that time period. So we begin in verse 18 here.

[5 : 46] And it says here, wives, submit to your husbands as it is fitting in the Lord. We begin with the Apostle Paul, letting the Colossians know that as people who are seeking to live things, they, as one who sets aside the former life and lives out the new life, in regards to the home, a wife is to submit to the husband.

Paul is doing something that is unheard of here, and with our modern mind, we may not see it immediately. Paul is speaking directly to wives.

Submission is not a call for women to be slaves or bond servants to their husbands, but rather it is to work with their husbands, to create a home and a family together, one that honors and glorifies God.

In marriage, as it says in Scripture, the two become one, and both are to work together. There is strength and wisdom that wives bring to the family.

Let this be a call to use your gifts, your talents and abilities in the home, in the church and in the community. If the Apostle Paul were to condone the framework of the times, like I said, he would only be addressing the males.

[7 : 12] And so, again, this may seem very strange to us, but that is so significant. A lot of people at that time, were very, they saw a certain framework of how to live life, and as we're going, we'll see that the Apostle Paul is speaking to that.

He is speaking outside of the cultural framework of the time. We go now to verse 19, the husbands to love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

Not only does the Apostle Paul speak to women, he speaks directly to the husbands. Paul is saying that husbands are to love their wives and not to be harsh with them.

For husbands, this kind of love, it's sacrificing. It's focusing not just on your own needs, but what is good for the family unit and in this case, what is good for your wife.

It is, again, working with your wife to ensure that she is in an environment where she feels safe and secure. It's also an encouragement for husbands to lead in family growth and in thriving.

[8 : 28] Both parts are to glorify God in what they say and what they do. Submission and love have been found throughout Scripture, and there's a beautiful comparison that is found in Ephesians, which mentions how Christ is the head and the church is the bride, and this helps us further understand what Paul is talking about.

Husbands love your wives, and it's the second part here, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

The Christian husband who is being made new, who's taking on the new self and not living the formal, the sinful life, but is exhibiting the love of Christ and is sacrificing, willing to give up his life for his wife.

Well, that is the kind of love that is worthy to be supported, followed or submitted to. This is similar to the love and the sacrifice that Christ made on the cross for our sins.

It's the same love that Christ has shown to us. Think about that. Think about the love that Christ has for us, the sacrificing kind of love, and in regards to submission, it has to do with who we are following.

[9 : 47] We follow the Lord in what he does. Christ is the promise keeper. God loves us and gave us his son, and God calls for us to submit to the love and the grace of Christ.

And so, wives are to submit when they're putting on their new self to their husbands. This is the framework that the Apostle Paul is presenting, and it's very different again, like what the world, the culture at the time, was offering.

The framework of the love of husbands and the submissions of life, it can be misinterpreted, where men can, her husbands can seek power over women, and women are seeking, well, in any case, it's when you have that sinful nature, selfish pursuits as it were.

But when you're being transformed by the Lord, there's something that is different. It is a more balanced approach, as husbands and wives are seen as equal in the eyes of God. What the Apostle Paul is saying here is that the transformation, it extends from our personal lives to our families and to our marriage, to the church and to the community.

[11 : 08] Let us allow for love to flow, overflow abundantly in the context of our interactions with the people that we know.

Husbands and wives are both called, and I want to make this very clear. They are called to put to death the former things and to put on the new, the higher things, and to be transformed by the Lord. We then go into verse 20 here, where it says, children, obey your parents and everything for this pleases the Lord. To obey means to essentially, to listen attentively, to be obedient, or to hear your parents.

And when it comes to children, it's not just about following the rules. It is about honoring God through listening, by listening and showing respect to your parents.

It encourages children to be a blessing to your parents, be a blessing to your family, and what you say and what you do and all members of the family matter in the eyes of God.

[12 : 21] We all have parents, don't we? We all have been a child at one point or another. Certainly, how can we obey or how can we honor our family?

It is in being a Christian and putting on the new self that, on the other side, right, children are to obey and parents are to also put on the new self, right? So it's this mutual thing that's happening. This is not to condone, again, abuse or people taking advantage of their call. When we see a child, sometimes when they listen, they might not do it with a cheerful heart, right?

How very often, we've all done it before. There's listening and there's listening, right? One is listening with a cheerful heart and cleaning your room.

There's a difference between saying, okay, I'm going to clean my room. Right? There's a difference between that. It all matters. It matters of the heart here.

[13 : 29] And again, it's two-way street here. Just as children are to obey their parents, parents, and we'll see specifically that the apostle Paul is also talking to fathers, make sure that you see what your children are doing.

Do you realize that children can come to the Lord too and that they can honor you by how they listen to you? Something definitely to think about. And throughout Scripture, we see this repeated pattern of children, how they should listen to the guidance and the teaching of their parents. And this is so that they can become people who have that relationship in the Lord. Let us remember that children are a gift from God. And how wonderful is it when that gift is, when our children come to know the Lord?

And when they are being transformed. For us parents, if our children are disobeying or they're not listening, how do we respond?

Certainly there's prayer and being there for them, but also knowing that they are still our children. We still love them.

[14 : 47] It's this repeated pattern. If we are not showing our children that Christ loves us or godly qualities or attributes of the new life in Christ, again, it's a two-way street.

Show your kids what it means to be a Christian. And for children, you reflect that love back to your parents in honoring them. And so now we go to verse 21 here.

Fathers do not provoke your children. Fathers do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged. And while we see that the apostle Paul is writing to husbands and wives and children, there's continued instructions for men, specifically for fathers here.

It's a reminder to put on the new self and to exhibit these godly qualities to children. And I sometimes think, God, why are you giving double instructions to fathers here?

You're giving to husbands and fathers now. For some of us, we may understand what that means, right? It's kind of like God is doubling down on the importance of having good godly men, husbands, and fathers.

[16 : 00] And as a father of five myself, I got to keep myself in check. Right? I got to make sure that I am firm with my kids, but I also make sure that I show them that I love them.

And that can be a hard thing. Sometimes they get so frustrating, you just, why aren't you listening to me, right? There's a similar passage in Ephesians chapter 6 verse 4.

It's a parallel here. Fathers do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the what? In the discipline and the instruction of the Lord.

That's why I was saying it's a two-way street here, right? That children are to obey their parents. Parents are specifically fathers, what Paul is mentioning here, is to instruct your children in the ways of God.

It's the same kind of love that God the Father has for us and the kind of love that we in the church are to have with each other. Right? We stand firm in truth.

[17:09] We're firm with our children, but we also deal in love. I want to, for me personally, this convicts me a great deal. Because I want to be able to teach my kids how to be godly men and women.

That moves me not to discourage them. This provoking, this word that shows up is not, it's defined as stirring things up or prolonging things.

How many of you have heard that phrase before? Don't ruffle their feathers, right? Or don't stir the pot, right? Oh!

It's not dragging things longer than they should be, right? So when it's coming in this, what it's talking about in this verse is, be firm, deal in love and instruct your children.

But do not drag on the past or stir up the pot. That is incredibly hard. But it's what we're called to do.

[18:10] With my own wife and children, both of these instructions from Paul, from a father and a husband's perspective, is to love my wife, not be harsh with her, not to provoke my own children.

It reminds me a great deal of the importance of the qualities. Why we should put on the new self for men and for women and for children?

Because there is such transformation that comes from the Lord. Think about worldly families and how they may conduct their household.

And then think for a moment about how God wants something very different. That's what the apostle Paul is doing here, is presenting something different than what was shown at the time, much like how the Lord presents something different for us today.

I have to be patient. I have to control my strength and love other people more than myself. I can't be selfish here. We shouldn't be selfish. We should take on patience and these, the meekness and the qualities of the new self.

[19:25] Let all of these things, let them be callings, not to be a discouragement. Let us think for a moment. And these passages I know are very difficult.

It's one of the hardest passages to go over. Let us be reminded that if we need strength or if we need comfort or wisdom for the Lord, we ask God for that strength and those ability that renewed that wisdom and that insight.

Pray to the Lord, ask him for that. And there's many times where we may fall short or we may sin or we'll just mess up. How many of us messed up today?

You don't have to raise your hands, right? Or this week, if you didn't mess up this week, I really want to know what's going on here, right?

Let it be a call for you to ask the guidance and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to help you in your life. Let us seek the Lord and pray to the Lord to exhibit these qualities within the family context, whether you're a wife or a husband or a child.

[20:43] For God transforms us from the inside out. Do not let this burden you. Even if you have not done any of this before and taking on the new self, it shows the power of who our God is, the power of salvation and the continued inner working of the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

First and foremost, believe in the Lord. First become a Christian. Then grow, read your Bible and pray and be in Christian community and don't ever be afraid to come to the Lord for continued help.

That is what's beautiful about our God. Salvation, you've heard me say this before and I'll say it again. Salvation is not the end of your life. It is the beginning of your new life in Christ.

To have that eternal security in this life, it should give us confidence to live this life and let God to continue to work in and through us.

To know God and to grow in him is to allow God to transform our lives, our own personal lives and let it manifest into our relationships.

[22:01] You may be in a situation where you may not have a functioning family. Let God work in your life though and pray for every single one of those members of your family.

I can tell you on a very personal note, I was adopted and I do not know my biological mother or father and that's okay.

Because I was raised in a good home where my mother and father, my adopted mother and father, I call them mom and dad. Because they loved me and they took me in.

It's something I still very difficult to talk about but it goes to show you though. We all don't, we may not have the perfect family and that's okay.

Let that be a reminder for you. I mean, don't raise your hand. But who has a perfect family? Right? Who's got a perfect family? Right? We all have things in our families, right?

[23 : 10] When we're reading this, it can be incredibly discouraging. You're like, well, my husband is this or my wife is that. Have you seen my children? It's understanding that when we become a Christian and we're being transformed in our minds and our hearts and in our very lives, imagine how wonderful it can be if your entire family comes to know the Lord.

And I understand very often that's not always the case. I think of my own family. I think of my cousins who live very worldly lives. I think of a lot of them but I still love them.

I still exhibit that love of Christ with them even if they're lost and even if they're worldly or sinning.

And so you may be in a situation where you have a spouse or you may have a child, you may have a cousin that isn't exhibiting the love of Christ.

You don't even know the Lord. You can still be there for them. Be that beacon of hope and maybe just maybe the Lord wanted you to be saved so that you can reach out to your family.

That's something else to think about. We go to verse 22. So we're talking about marriage and bond servants.

[24 : 39] This is a very difficult verse here. Bond servants obey in everything. Those who are your earthly matters, not by way of eye services, people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart fearing the Lord.

Just like how the Apostle Paul was writing to wives and husbands and children, he is writing to slaves or bond servants. And I want to address something head on here.

In preparing for this sermon, I saw that there were many churches, and this isn't a criticism. This is just an observation. Many churches speak on how today there's no longer slavery here in America.

And the best modern day relatability has to do with how our employer is the master and we are the slave by being the employee. Well, yes and no. I would more so say no.

The Apostle Paul was writing in a time when having servants and slaves was commonplace. Paul's job was to proclaim the good news of the gospel and establishing early Christianity and speaking to the existing social structure.

[25 : 44] When the Apostle Paul is speaking to each individual's in the home, so to speak, it's a call for transformation, a call to know the Lord, and a call to deal differently within the social structure.

That's what's remarkable about these verses. The Apostle Paul is saying, and look, this is not easy to say, right? The Apostle Paul is saying that if you're a slave or a bond servant, depending upon which translation you use, you obey with sincerity of heart and not being a people pleaser. I want to put this up.

Does this mean that the Apostle Paul is condoning slavery? The answer is no. Absolutely not because the entire book of Philemon. The Apostle Paul is writing to Philemon in regards to Onesimus, the runaway slave, right?

He ran away, he met Paul, he became a believer, he served for the cause of Christ, and he grew closer to Paul. The whole point of the letter, if you haven't read Philemon, you should read it, or if you were here when we went over Philemon, was the Apostle Paul wrote the letter to Philemon in regards to Onesimus to consider that this man knows the Lord and is a brother in Christ, you should consider him a free man. What a revolutionary thought at that time.

And so going back to this verse, Paul is saying to obey, knowing that in the early church in Colossae and in the Roman Empire, it was a society where slaves and servants was common.

[27 : 23] That doesn't mean that the Word of God can still transform people even in such a social structure. That, we've got to keep that in mind. Let's go to verse 23 here, work for God and not for man. This is the verse we can apply to employer and employee relations, right?

So Paul is going on and saying that when you're working, no matter what your status is, right, contextually it's talking about slaves or servants, bond servants, right? Those who are indentured servants, this can be applied to all of us, right?

In whatever work that we do, that makes sense. It's a call to work for God and not for man, though. Think about that. Yeah, we can absolutely apply it to us today.

Who do you work for? Do you work for man or do you work for the Lord? It should be a very cut and dry answer. And contextually though, it's speaking to those who are in bondage, slaves and servants. It speaks to us today that no matter what our situation in life is, we can still come to the Lord and know that we are secure by believing in the Lord.

And let us not forget also that slavery still exists in the world. In fact, it has existed in most of the history of the world.

[28 : 43] I know that's a difficult thing to talk about, a difficult thing to address. Can this passage still speak to someone who may be in a country or in a situation where they are enslaved?

Absolutely. We just don't hear about it in the United States so much, but it still exists. Verse 24, what a beautiful verse.

The Lord will give an inheritance knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Jesus Christ. This can be taken out of context very easily here. But it's knowing here that if you are a Christian and you're in that social status where you're enslaved or you're in bondage, you have that eternal reward of knowing the Lord and receiving salvation through faith.

But also it's saying here that the work that you're doing will be considered a treasure in heaven. And that's remarkable to me to know that.

[29 : 46] When you work with all that you are for the glory of God, you will receive a reward. Not only will slaves and servants receive the ultimate reward of salvation by believing in the Lord, they will receive treasures in heaven for the good that they do.

And contextually, this is speaking directly to a culture where the class system was very different than ours today. But let's not forget America has had a history in that too. And it's very unfortunate. It does still speak to us today, regardless of our class or our status in our culture today. We then go into verse 25.

The wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong, right? What does it say? For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done and there is no partiality. The apostle Paul is doubling down. He's going even further by letting slaves and servants know that the one who does wrong will reap what they sow.

Do you really think? Do you understand that God will punish those who are wicked? Do you understand that? Do you? God will judge the ones who do evil to Christians.

[31 : 02] And God is not pleased when a Christian does evil to brothers and sisters in Christ. Something that should comfort us.

Knowing that those who do evil, they will reap what they sow. I know some of us may hear the phrase, oh, well, you know, they're going to get what they deserve.

Well, think of it like this. And it's really harsh to hear it. You will reap what you sow. When we think of someone who is evil and is sinning and is doing wrong in the eyes of God, it will come back. That's very harsh language, but it's language that we should understand for those who do evil. In the context here, the Lord is saying, look, the wrongdoer in the context of slaves and servants, they will reap what they sow.

They will be paid back for the wrong that has happened. We're called to become believers through faith, to put to death the former life, the terrible qualities, and to put on the new godly qualities.

[32 : 13] And finally, we go to chapter four, verse one. I would think this would be the final verse of chapter three, but that's okay. It's still important. Masters, treat your bond servants justly and fairly, knowing that you have a master in heaven, which is continuing from that previous verse.

Paul writes to the masters of the slaves and servants saying that they need to treat them justly and fairly, because not only do they have a master in heaven, but they are accountable to God.

Again, do you see it now that Paul is speaking to an existing culture where slaves and masters were common, where culture where really it was primarily men at the top, but it's being changed here.

I'm sure that just as there were men and women who came to believe in Christ, there must have been those who were rich and those who were poor, who came to know the Lord, but also slaves and masters.

A transformed master will see that he is accountable to God and God is the king, he is the supreme, he is the sovereign Lord of all. And in this case, God exhibits love and kindness, justice, transformation, truth, and peace.

[33 : 37] What God offers is better than what earthly leaders or what earthly masters have to offer. It's the difference between what God gives and what the world will give.

And consider this, if slaves and servants and masters are, or if slaves and servants are considered equal in the eyes of God, masters, why would you mistreat them?

If they're a brother and sister in Christ, you shouldn't be mistreating them. Why should a man or a woman who is free in Christ, who has been set free from the bondage of sin, be viewed upon as a slave to men?

What a revolutionary thought that the apostle Paul is presenting here. And to bring all of this together, the apostle Paul is writing to the Colossians, showing them that in becoming a Christian, they are to put to death the former life, the former things.

I jokingly said a couple of weeks ago, that song, you've got to change your evil ways. Well, that's a good reminder even for us today. You got to change your evil ways, put to death the former life, right? And put on the new life in Christ.

[34 : 52] In doing this, the apostle Paul is showing that in the eyes of God, we are considered to be children of light, children of the Lord and brothers and sisters in Christ.

Scripture offers something that is much different in these verses. It is the seed of transformation that is happening in the early church and also in the culture.

And this transformation that I speak of happens, it begins from the individual person, from the inside out. Men, women and children are seen as equal in the eyes of God. They are of equal importance. And in these verses, no matter what your social status is, slaves, servants, masters, they are equal in the eyes of God. Galatians chapter 3 verse 38, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female for you are all one.

And in the eyes of Christ Jesus, if we are all seen as equal in the eyes of God, wouldn't that prove that God does not want slavery to exist in the world?

[36 : 09] Wouldn't that show it? Think about that. Consider again the book of Philemon where Paul was making a case that Onesimus should be seen as a free man just as he is free in Christ.

I'm going to put that up here. This is what Paul is saying. Perhaps the reason that he, Onesimus, was separated from you Philemon for a little while was that you might have him back forever.

At first you're like, what do you mean? What's it say next? No longer as a what? But better than a slave. As a dear what? As a brother.

He is very dear to me, but even dearer to you both as a man and as a brother in the Lord. We find that in scripture.

Consider the Exodus as the other one. Moses answered the people, do not be afraid, stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today will never see again. The Lord will fight for you. You need only to be still. What did it say? You will see the deliverance.

[37 : 22] And then in Exodus chapter 20 verse 2, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of where? Out of Egypt, out of the land of what? Slavery.

There are of course other verses in your notes. Check out Esther sometime. You'll see in your notes Esther chapter 4 verse 14 and Esther chapter 7 verse 3 to 4.

Those are some really good verses to check out on your own time. I wanted to leave that for, I'm giving you some homework here. But check that out.

And I encourage all of you as we took communion today to realize and to remember to see the power of Jesus Christ sacrifice on the cross, making salvation available for all who believe.

Not only are we eternally secure in the arms of the Father, transformation comes from the inside out from our personal lives and also to our relationships, to our marriage and to our family.

[38 : 26] It extends from us, right? Radiating the love of Christ, patience and humility, right? All of these qualities to those that we come in contact with, right?

Those that we interact with. We are called to believe in the Lord, to get baptized, to read the Word of God and let the word well within us richly. And let the triune God continue to work in your life, put off the former self and put on the new life in Christ, trusting and obeying him.

It may seem overwhelming to begin in submission to God and following in his footsteps, but that is why we seek direction from the Lord, from his word and encouragement within the body of Christ. Do you realize that when you come to church, you're encouraged and you're loved and we help one another? We help one another grow in Christ. When we sin, when we fall short or when we make a mistake, let us not be discouraged, but let us know that we are continually being made new. Let us turn to the Lord for strength and for guidance. This world promotes so many awful and terrible things, hatred, division, abuse.

[39 : 45] The list will go on and on. We could be here all day, couldn't we? But we could also be here all day knowing that God offers life, freedom and clarity, love and transformation.

And in Christ, there is no Jew or Greek. There is no slave or free. There is no male or female. We're all equal in the eyes of God.

And it is God who dwells within us. And as we are going to sing this final song here, let us make a joyful noise. Let us lift up a shout of praise and be thankful for the salvation that God gives to us for the newness of life in him.

And I pray that this church will be known for being a church that is faithful to God, faithful to his word and exhibits the love of Christ to others.

Let transformation from God happen here. Let us pray. And gracious Father, we thank you for the transformative power of your love. We thank you for sending your son, Jesus the Christ, who gives us salvation through faith in him.

[40 : 59] We praise you God for giving us your word and may we be transformed by it. May we be transformed by you. We pray that you will help us put to death the former life, put on the new life, transform our very lives, transform our marriages, our families and beyond.

Lord, we realize that our families are not perfect. May we exhibit the love of Christ to our families, even if that's our spouse, even if that's our own children.

May we be that beacon of hope. Help us to see one another as brothers and sisters of Christ, regardless of our social standing in the world.

No matter what the cultural framework is, Lord, may we honor and glorify you. May we love one another as you have loved us. May we be a light in this world that shines the light, the love and truth that comes from you to others.

And all these things we say together in Jesus' name, amen. Thank you for tuning in to the Ontario Community Church sermon podcast. For more about our church and how you can get involved or support our mission, please visit ontariocommunitychurch.org.

[42 : 18] May God's blessings be with you.