On Good Authority

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Date: 01 November 2026

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[0:00] Please take your Bibles and open them up this morning to the book of Colossians. We're nearing the end of our series in Colossians this week and Lord willing next week we will wrap up this letter from Paul to the church in Colossae.

And we have over the past several weeks been seeing how the gospel of Jesus Christ transforms our mind, how it transforms our way of life and this pursuit of holiness that we're called to in the Lord.
And this week we see how the gospel transforms all of our relationships, whether in the home or in the workplace or in the world. So let's take a look. Colossians chapter 3 verse 18 all the way through chapter 4 verse 1 is our passage this morning.
Colossians 3 verse 18 through 4 verse 1. If you don't have a Bible, that's okay. We should have one nearby and seat back in front of you. But when you found that, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's word this morning.
Paul says, Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord.
[1:15] 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.

Bond servants, 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 bond servants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a master in heaven.
The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Father, Father, we pray, God, that our relationships would be a reflection of your grace at work in our lives.
[2:19] We pray that we would not be conformed to the patterns of this world and our relationships, but that we would be transformed by the renewal of our mind according to your word, by the power of your spirit.

We pray, God, would you use the preaching of your word this morning to that end? We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. When I was in elementary school, we used to play a game called King of the Mountain.
You may know it as King of the Hill, and I'm pretty sure it's been outlawed now, but they weren't as concerned with safety back then. And so the game was played on a jungle gym, this mound of steel.
And the goal was that at the end of the day, at the end of the recess period, you would be the one left standing on top of the jungle gym. And so the bell rings to let everyone out for recess, and everyone rushes out to the playground.
And like a pack of rabid, wild animals, we wrestle our way up to the top. If somebody is above you, then you grab their legs and you pull them down.
[3:27] And if you happen to be on the top, well, then you kick and you push and you make sure that you do whatever it takes to stay there. And if you survive until the bell rings or the teacher calls quits or the ambulance arrives, then you are the king of the mountain.

The sad truth is that this type of grappling for a place at the top is not restricted to the elementary school playground, is it? In fact, this is the way that we tend to operate in many of our relationships in the real world.

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Ever since the Garden of Eden, all of mankind has this distorted relationship with authority. We all want to be the king of the mountain. And if we happen to be in positions of authority, well, then we can misuse our authority and we can harm those under our care.
We see this at every level of every relationship that we're in. Husbands and wives, parents and children, workers and bosses.
If we are under authority, our sinful inclination is to rebel. And if we are in authority, then our sinful inclination is to be harsh.
[4:44] And all of this is the obvious impact of sin in the world. But here in Colossians chapter 3, Paul steps in here to all of this confusion to say, Church, God has something different in mind for you.

God has placed each and every one of us, both in and under authority, for our good. And as reborn, spirit-indwelt followers of Jesus Christ, each and every one of us is called to submit ourselves to God's good design for our relationships at home, at work, and in the world.
Let's take a look here to Colossians chapter 3, and we're going to see three relationships transformed by the gospel of Christ. This will be our outline this morning. If you're taking notes, three relationships transformed by the gospel.
And the first is the relationship between husband and wife. The gospel transforms the relationship between husband and wife. Look there with me, starting in verse 18.
And here, before I even get into this, I want to go ahead and correct the natural impulse that each and every one of us has in the room here, okay? You know what it is. Husbands, you are going to hear this command of Paul, wives, submit to your husbands, and you're going to think of all the many ways that you wish your wives would obey that command.
[6:11] And wives, when we get to the instructions to husbands to love your wives and to not be harsh with them, you're going to think of all the ways you wish your husband would do better and be more obedient to God's command.

Here's what I want you to do. I want you to not think of what God has called your spouse to do. You take ownership of what God has called you to do. Your spouse's obedience to the Lord is not within your control.
So together, you look at this passage together and you say, this is not, my intention is not to control what you do, but my intention is to see what has God called me to do, and then by the power of his spirit to go and do it.
And here's the hard part, whether or not your spouse ever does what God calls them to do, you continue to obey the commands of the Lord. So first, let's speak to the wives as Paul does first. Wives, you are called to submit to your husband as is fitting in the Lord. And if there was ever a more unpopular verse in the Bible, I'm not sure what it is.
[7:15] The rise of feminism, especially in the 1960s, and then what became called evangelical feminism, in the 1970s has made this whole topic of submission just very dangerous ground.

And their claim is that there is essentially no distinction between men and women, that a text like this is culturally rooted. And so we shouldn't take this as a prescription to be followed in our modern society where women have finally gained ground up on the men.
And so what you see is a breaking down of what is called traditional gender roles, both in the home and in the church. But church, the fact is, there is a fundamental difference between men and women.
God has made us beautifully distinct from one another. We are not interchangeable. We are designed to complement one another.
And this design is not culturally defined. This difference, it began all the way back in the Garden of Eden when God first made man and gave him the task of keeping the garden and then made woman and brought her to the man to be his helper in the task.
[8:32] So that together in their complementary roles with Adam as the lead and Eve as his helper, together they would fill the earth with the image of God and rule over his creation.

Both Adam and Eve are equally made in the image of God. Both Adam and Eve are equally worthy of dignity and honor and respect.
And Adam and Eve were created differently with different tasks in the garden. Different roles in the relationship.

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These roles were in place in God's good design, not after the fall, but before sin ever entered into the world, not as a result of sin. The result of sin is that these roles became something that we resent instead of something that we embrace.
Do you remember how the Lord told Eve in Genesis chapter 3, after the fall, your desire will be for your husband, not in a good way.
[9:36] This is the same language that we see later in chapter 4 of Genesis where he tells Cain, your desire will be for you, sin's desire will be for you, but you must rule over it. It says this desire to usurp authority.

Your desire shall be for your husband, but he shall rule over you, not in a loving way, but in an oppressive way. This is the result of sin. This is a power struggle in the jungle gym of marriage. The wife will desire the place at the top. She'll want to pull her way up. Meanwhile, the husband will rule over his wife in a harsh and overbearing way, or if not that, then he'll do exactly what Adam did and just lazily step aside to avoid the conflict.
But in a gospel-shaped marriage, we are called to put to death the influence of sin and return to God's good design. This is what he means by saying that all of this is fitting in the Lord.
This is God's good design. This is right in his eyes. So again, wives, you are called to submit to your husbands, not to every man, by no means.
[10:49] Women are not ever called to submit to men, nowhere in scripture. You, wife, are called to submit to your own husband. What does that look like? I'll give you a few observations here.

I think it looks like a posture of deference. It doesn't mean that you have no voice far from it. It means that you have a disposition to support your husband's leadership.
You put aside the desire to have the leading voice in the relationship, and you defer to your husband's leadership. I think it looks like also an embrace of dignified support.
An embrace of dignified support. Dignified because God has called you to it. And support because your husband needs your help. Amen? God has tasked you and your husband together with this same sort of call to fill the earth with image bearers, not just by having children, but by making disciples, and to tend the garden where he has planted you.
Your husband takes the lead here, but you are called to gladly and joyfully come alongside to support and to help in whatever ways God has gifted you.
[12:05] It looks like an affirmation of his God-giving authority. The fact is, you may be smarter than your husband. Don't say amen. You may be more skilled in a number of ways than your husband.

You may be spiritually farther along than your husband. But the fact remains, God has given him the role of leadership in your marriage. So you are called to affirm him in that role, to support him in that role, to help him in that role, and to encourage him in that role.
One more. It looks like, ultimately, submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is key. And this is true for all of the realms of authority in our lives and all of our relationships.
We submit to our earthly authorities under Christ. Christ is the Lord. Christ is the ultimate authority. And so if any earthly authority, husbands included, were to ever lead us to do something that Christ has forbidden or forbids us to do something Christ has commanded, well, now we have an issue, don't we?
[13:15] Well, now in as respectful and affirming a way as the wife can do and sharing how desperately she wants to be able to follow her husband's lead, now she must say, no, I will follow Christ.

She must submit, ultimately, to the Lord Jesus. So the call on wives is to submit to your own husbands. Husbands, you are called to love your wives.
Love your wives. Now what does this look like? To borrow a phrase from Boston, it is more than a feeling. There are feelings of love and adoration and affection, of course, that should be pursued and should be kindled in a healthy marriage, but anybody who's been married for any length of time knows that those feelings are not always there, are they?
I mean, it's great when they are there. We should want to feel those feelings of love, but true love shows up even when you don't feel like it. And what does it look like to love your wife, husbands?
1 Corinthians 13 tells us love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast.
[14:32] It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful.

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It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
Love never ends. The call for a Christian husband is not to rule over your wife in an overbearing way or to make sure that she submits to you or to be harsh or to be rude or to be condescending or to be self-serving.
Your call, husband, is to love your wife. In fact, it is to love your wife as Christ loved the church. This is what Paul says in Ephesians chapter 5.
I remember when I was in college, my pastor was doing some premarital counseling for a non-believing, a non-Christian couple, and he took them through this passage, and so they read Ephesians 5 where it says, wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.
[15:41] 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. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

They heard this and they bowed up and got defensive. What do you mean the wife is supposed to submit to the husband? That is old-fashioned.
That's crazy, pastor. But then they kept reading and they saw the call on the husband. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church.
How did he love the church? He gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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.
A healthy Christian marriage is a reflection of the gospel of Jesus Christ. So we see the gospel transforms the relationship between husband and wife.
[16:56] Second, we see also the gospel transforms the relationship between children and parents. This is another relationship of authority that each of us has been in at one point or another.

And we see this in verses 20 and 21. Paul says, Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged.
And again, as we look at Ephesians, we see some more context from the parallel passage in Ephesians, chapter 6. Paul says, Children, obey your parents and the Lord, for this is right.
Honor your father and your mother. He quotes from the Ten Commandments. This is the first commandment with a promise that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.
Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the lures. Let's start again. Let's start with the kids. It's important, parents, that we teach our kids that God calls them to obey.
[18:04] That children are called by the Lord to obey their parents in everything, it says. Why? For ultimately, this pleases not just mom and dad, but ultimately, this pleases the Lord.

This is not optional. How many times? I can't tell you how many times I've been around other parents and they try and correct their disobedient child and maybe they try a second time, maybe they try a third time and the child continues to disobey and they say, well, he doesn't want to listen.
Parents should expect prompt obedience from their children and again, while we affirm children are just as worthy of respect, they are equally made in the image of God as the parents, they are worthy of worth and dignity and they are valuable in the eyes of God and yet, we also affirm there is a distinction in role in the relationship in the household.
Parents are called to lead and disciple their children. Children are called to obey and to honor their parents in the Lord and I will tell you from experience, this is hard work, parents.
It is much easier to not expect obedience from your kids. It is much easier to give in to demands or to put a screen in front of them just to keep them happy and quiet.
[19:34] It is much easier to let disobedience slide so that you don't have to do the hard work of correction and discipline. All of that is easier than it is to expect your children to obey but again, what we have to remember is that this is not ultimately about us and our pride and obedience to us.

This is again ultimately about their obedience to the Lord. God calls children to obey their parents and the Lord takes this seriously.
It is right here in the Ten Commandments this foundational summary of the law for the people of Israel. Honor your father and your mother that it may go well with you that you may live long in the land.

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There is this blessing and prosperity and longevity that is associated with listening to mom and dad. And on the other hand in the pages of the New Testament disobedience to parents is grouped alongside other serious offenses to the Lord.
Paul warns Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 3 he says understand this that in the last days there will come times of difficulty for people will be lovers of self lovers of money proud arrogant abusive disobedient to their parents does that sound out of place?
[20:56] Ungrateful unholy heartless unappeasable slanderous without self control brutal not loving good treacherous reckless swollen with conceit lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God all of this is alongside disobedient to their parents Romans 1 Paul says something similar of those whom God gave over to their sinful passions he says they were filled with all manner of unrighteousness evil covetousness malice they are full of envy murder strife deceit maliciousness they are gossip slanderers haters of God insolent haughty boastful inventors of evil disobedient to their parents when children run the household as they do in so many families the result in the home and eventually the result in the society is absolute chaos because as you know untrained children grow up to be untrained adults parents are called to do the hard work discipling their children in the Lord and expecting obedience so long as they are in their own home but they must do so they must do so according to verse 21 without provoking them it says lest they become discouraged some translations say without angering them or without discouraging them now this is a difficult balance to strike parents are called to train their children and to raise them in the Lord to expect obedience to discipline disobedience to teach them the word to teach them how to function in a God honoring way in the world all while making sure not to push them so hard that they get discouraged we need grace here parents we need much grace and I say parents because both are involved but would you notice here again Paul specifically addresses the dads fathers do not provoke your children fathers do not discourage your children why it's because in
God's design there is a special responsibility given to dad as the head of the home that's not to say mom is not involved here of course not in fact especially if mom stays home and dad goes out to work mom is going to be busy all day long correcting and disciplining often during the day mom is going to be teaching and instructing she will have plenty of opportunity to either encourage or to discourage her kids but the father in particular bears the responsibility to lead in setting the expectations for the home and to lead in such a way that encourages his children rather than discourages his children the fact is children are going to get angry with you occasionally if you're actually parenting them because parenting requires you to say no!
and to say yes and do this and don't do that it requires discipline it requires correction but you can do so dads in such a way that you are not driving your children to anger by your harshness by your overbearing attitude by your constant criticism by your unrealistic expectations situations you can with the help of God parent in such a way that seeks their good not just their compliance do you parent with law or do you parent with grace do your children expect to hear criticisms from you when you open up your mouth to address them or do they expect to be told with grace that you love them that God loves them that we are called to honor him and obey him and dad and mom and kids and this is why we're called not to lie and cover up a wrong this is why we're called to be kind to one another this is why we're called to obey it's not just because
I want you to obey me it's because this is for your spiritual good and the honor of the Lord Jesus what kids need more than anything is a mom and a dad who love them who lead them by the word of God who hold the line and expect obedience and encourage them along the way this is a hard task parents but God will empower you for the task and as an imperfect father and an imperfect husband raising so many beautiful but imperfect children I can tell you there is grace available for you dad and mom so we see the relationship of husband and wife is transformed the relationship of parent and child is transformed and third we see one final relationship here we see the gospel transforms the relationship between servant and master look there starting in verse 22 through chapter 4 verse 1 he says bond servants 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 bond servants justly and fairly knowing that you also have a master in heaven now right away we need to acknowledge the fact that the bible speaks to the relationship of slave or servant and master and what it does not do is

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approve of the institution of slavery this is not an approval of the institution of slavery but it does speak to this relationship of bond servant and master and we shouldn't be surprised that [27:32] Paul speaks to this because in the context here in Colossae you could expect that many households there in Colossae had this relationship within the family unit and so for those who are in that situation of life they would want to know how do I live as a Christian in the circumstance of life that I'm in how do I live both in and under authority we should also be careful not to read our culture's experience with American slavery back into this context all the way back here in Colossae some of these bond servants were working off a debt others voluntarily chose to stay and to work for their master because of the strong relationship that they had formed often they were live in workers in the house they were in many ways a part of the family unit which is why Paul addresses them here alongside husband and wife parents and children but even so we have to recognize and affirm the very idea of ownership of another human being made in the image of

God is disgusting and offensive to the Lord the Bible in no way affirms the idea of forced human slavery so what does it say for the bond servant they are expected to obey their masters they are under their authority and not just to make their master think that they're working hard but to truly and genuinely work hard to give their best effort in their work they're to serve to the best of their ability why because again ultimately as believers there is a hierarchy of authority here and ultimately they are serving a higher authority they are serving the Lord Jesus Christ so yes they have a human authority over them yes they have an earthly master yes they're serving him but ultimately there is a higher master that they serve with their labors and this master cannot be fooled this master sees the effort that you put in all the way down to the attitude of your heart this master knows whether you're just working to clock in and clock out or whether you're truly sincerely laboring with all of your heart and what a comfort to know this master will call into account every injustice in the workplace and will reward his faithful servants with an eternal inheritance
I mean talk about a motivation to work hard but just as he's done throughout the rest of these relationships Paul not only addresses those under authority he also speaks to those in authority he says you masters although you are higher up than the servants working under your charge in this working relationship guess what you too have a master in fact here's the equalizer you both serve the same master you are fellow servants together in your various roles and so you are called to be fair and to be just because you also have a master in heaven it's the same one as the Lord Jesus Christ now of course I am thankful that we don't have this working relationship today but the closest equivalent for us church is in our context it is the employee boss relationship that when you as a Christian are employed to do a job it really doesn't matter what the job is you could be hired to pick up trash on the side of highway 17 or you could be the president of the United States whatever it is that you are called to do you are called to do it with sincerity of heart and to work hard for the glory of God yes to make your boss happy whoever that may be but ultimately you work for the Lord Jesus Christ you labor for him you serve him as your master whatever work he's called you to do you do with eagerness and with honesty and with zeal for him Christians ought to be the best employees in the workplace and when you as a Christian have others under your charge may no one be able to say of you my boss is a lazy man a dishonest woman an unfair master a harsh critic may they be so impressed by the way that you serve them as you work and as you lead with fairness and with uprightness that then you are able to say to them well guess what
I'm serving a boss too church do you find yourself playing king of the mountain with your relationships when you're under authority that God has placed in your life do you find that you're inclined to reach and to grapple to try and pull your way up to the top do you feel the desire wives to grapple with your husband for leadership in your home children do you listen and obey your parents employees do you cut corners and serve your own interests and if God has placed you in authority do you push and do you kick do you treat others harshly husbands do you wrestle with passivity in your role or are you harsh and overbearing fathers do you parent your children with grace bosses do you treat your employees with respect and with dignity
[33:24] John Calvin says it is not enough for men to be reformed in their minds and to have their hearts changed unless this regeneration appears also in their outward life and especially in their mutual actions and relationships with one another Spurgeon says our relationships are the true mirrors of our religion and the gospel is meant to transform your home it's meant to transform your workplace it's meant to transform your conversations with your neighbors and your friends your relationships here in the church every relationship you have is an opportunity for the transforming

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work of Christ to play itself out in real time God has placed each and every one of us both in and under authority and he has done it for our good for those who believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ God is at work in you sanctifying you calling you to honor him in every realm of your life at home at work and everywhere and ultimately church he is transforming you into the image of his son

Jesus Christ who though he is the eternal son of God equal in glory with the father yet gladly obeys and submits to the eternal plan of redemption!
Christ who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross so that he might purchase for himself a bride to love and to lead and to enjoy for the rest of eternity the obedient son of God submitted himself to imperfect earthly parents the one who created all things learned to trade and worked hard with his hands and ultimately he submitted himself to those who would put him to death Jesus submitted himself to earthly authorities he was like we are both in and under authority and now as the risen Lord Jesus he is the one who has all authority as he says in
Matthew 28 all authority and in heaven and on earth has been given to me if you find that you are trying to kick him off of the throne friend the call for you this morning is to submit yourself to King Jesus and then to live in glad submission to his design for your good and for his glory let's pray father god we thank you that you do have a design for us and we confess how easy it is for us to reject your design how easy it is for us to conform ourselves to the patterns of this world but father we do pray would we follow your good design for our homes would our marriages here in this church flourish would our children be raised up in obedience to you and would we be gospel witnesses at the workplace by our work ethic and our desire to honor you above all else we pray god would you work this grace in our lives we pray in
Jesus name amen

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