

Christian Relationships and Personal Living – Col 3:18-4:18

In the last lesson, Col 3:16-17) stated some of the most profound statements of the book, all of which relate to the theme that the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ. His word is supreme in all that we do:

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 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.

If all people will allow the word of Christ to dwell in their hearts, and always speak and do in the name of the Lord, New Testament Christianity will be secure.

Personal Relationships Established in Christ

For Christians, their personal relationships are the most important areas of their lives where the word of Christ should dictate their actions and behaviors. Paul establishes proper relationships for Christians who are husbands and wives, parents and children, workers and employers (masters and slaves). When the word of Christ dictates what we say and do in our personally relationship, we will satisfy the requirements of the Bible, and live better lives. Paul begins with husbands and wives. Companion passages in Ephesians illuminate these passages in Colossians.

Wives and Husbands

Col 3:18

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

In Eph 5:22-24, Paul describes the relationship of husband the wives, and compares it to Christ and the church and how the church submits to Christ, for he is the head of the church and himself the savior of the body:

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Col. 3:19

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

In Eph 5:25-28, Paul describes the relationship of the husband to the wives in the same metaphor of Christ and the church. Husbands are to love their wives, just as Christ loved the church:

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.

Children and Parents

Col 3:20

20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

Parallel passages in Ephesians continue to eliminate Colossians. Eph 6:1-3 states the full relationship of children to their parents:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother"-which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

The addition of the statement: "Honor your father and mother," is an admonition to children that will make their lives long and happy. Honor and obey – these should be the watchwords for children as they work to please their parents.

Col 3:21

21 Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

Fathers and children travel their lives together: children must honor their parents, but parents should not embitter their children. These two go together. In Ephesians, a word used for fathers is the word *exasperate*. This word contrasts with teaching and admonishing the children. Eph 6:4 teaches:

4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Slaves and Masters

Col 3:22-25

22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. 25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.

The chief idea for slaves in that day was to work for their masters as they would if they were working for the Lord. Today, this applies to employees, since we live in an age beyond slavery. The key phrase expresses the idea that we should work as if working for the Lord and not for men. Christian employees may rest easy with the idea that if they be treated wrongly the Lord will repay that deed. Eph 6:5-8 teaches:

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

Col 4:1

1 Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Christian employers must treat their employees in a way that is right fair, understanding that they also have a master in heaven. There are no stricter rules laid down in the New Testament than those rules that call for employers and masters to give fair treatment to those under them. James 5:3-5 dealt with the issue in strong words:

You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.

As with the other admonitions on personal relationships, Eph 6:9 offers a parallel to this Colossians' statement:

9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

Final Words

In verse two, Paul offers his final admonition to the church and states their responsibility with several admonitions. He follows this with personal statements about those with whom he is working.

Admonitions

Col 4:2-6

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. 5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Paul's admonition for them to watch, pray, and be thankful echoes the command of the Lord when he found his disciples sleeping in the garden just before his betrayal. In Matt 26:41, he said: "41 Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." Paul's admonition, on how to act toward outsiders, repeats the teaching to the Galatians in Gal 6:10: "10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." His closing words, "so that you may know how to answer everyone," are similar to those written in 1 Peter 3:15-17:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 1

The Status of Paul and His Companions

Col 4:7-18

7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8 I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. 9 He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) 11 Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. 12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. 13 I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea

and Hierapolis. 14 Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. 15 Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

17 Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord."

18 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Paul's words speak for themselves.

Study Questions From the Scriptures

1. Col 3:16-17: How should the word of god dwell in us? In what are we to do all things?
2. Col 3:18: How are the wives to act toward their husbands?
3. Eph 5:22-24: How should wives, submit to their husband? Who is the head of the church? Who is the Savior of the body? To whom does the church submit?
4. Col. 3:19: What does Paul forbid husbands to do to their wives?
5. Eph 5:25-28: Who are husbands to love? In what manner are they to love them? How does Christ cleanse the church? After this, cleansing, how did the church become?
6. Col 3:20: Who are children to obey?
7. Eph 6:1-3: When children obey their parents the Lord, what is the result?
8. Col 3:21: What does Paul forbid fathers to do?
9. Eph 6:4: How are fathers to bring up their children?
10. Col 3:22-25: How are slaves and employees to work for their masters and employers? Who will be rewarded? Who will be paid back?
11. Eph 6:5-8: How are slaves and employees to act toward their masters and employers? Whose will are we doing when we obey our employers?
12. Col 4:1: What are masters to provide for their slaves?
13. James 5:3-5: Who cries out against masters? Who hears these cries?
14. Eph 6:9: Who is the master of all?
15. Col 4:2-6: To what are Christians to devote themselves? How are we to act toward outsiders? How do we deal with opportunity?