

## Introduction

- Some things we'd rather not face... some passages of Scripture we'd (I'd!!) rather not face!
  - one of the values of working through books from beginning to end
- Recap:
  - everything comes down to **centrality of Christ**;
  - Colossians were in danger of losing that because of some heresy they were being deceived by;
  - we too are often in danger of being drawn away onto other priorities, or easier paths.
- **Paul continually draws us back to look at life from the perspective of our relationship with Christ, or in light of that relationship.**
- So in passage we come to today, he's looking in particular at the **core relationships in our lives**, our personal relationships.
  - three main categories - **husbands/wives, parents/children, slaves/masters**;
  - there are principles to learn from each one, even if we don't fit obviously into one of the categories Paul is talking about in particular.
- Remembering that he is speaking to **Christians** and not to the general populace...

## Husbands and Wives (v.18, 19)

- **Joke:** two women talking: first says, *"My husband knows his place; he has never spoken a harsh word to me in his life"*; second is impressed, *"What a Christian gentleman he must be!"*; first replies, *"Not Christian, so much as cautious..."*
- Lots of hand-wringing about marriage, place that it has, family life, and so on.
  - divorce statistics are horrendous, the effect on children staggering;
  - I remember if being brought home to me once: John Drane commented that **men of his generation can't come to church on a Sunday** - they are with their kids from previous relationship!
- What can we do to turn the huge ship that is our culture?
  - not a lot...
- **But**
  - we can look to our own relationships, and what characterises them.

### **(18) Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. (19) Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.**

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- Two things here:
  - first, **give is the principle**, not take (and it is applied mutually);
  - second, this is **"in the Lord"** - because of relationship with him, and most fully possible in a relationship where both partners are Christians.
- **Submission and love are given, not demanded:**
  - it is not the husbands right to expect submission, it is the gift of his wife;
  - that someone would willingly submit themselves to another cannot be comprehended by someone whose ideal is freedom without restraint or authority
  - and that submission could be demanded is rightly condemned - that anyone could appeal to a passage such as this as justification for abusing, physically or otherwise, their wife is as abhorrent to God as it is to the ardent feminist
  - it is not the wife's right to expect no harsh treatment, but it is the gift of the husband's love.
- We live in a different world, where the dynamics of relationships between men and women have changed - but that **mutual self-giving** is still the key quality to strive for.
- **In the Lord:**
  - because **Christ has given himself for us** we can give ourselves completely for

## Colossians 3:18-4:1 Rules for Christian Households Fintry, 22/2/2004, pm

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- others;
- he cherishes us, protects us, loves us, and so we can afford to risk ourselves for others;
- *hard! beautiful!*

### Parents and Children (v.20, 21)

**(20) Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. (21) Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.**

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- Staggering absoluteness to these statements!
  - but again, "in the Lord"
  - so command that goes against what the Lord would have us do is possible to disobey - for the first call on our life is the Lord's call
  - for example, what should a child do who has come to faith, but whose parents are worried that they are being drawn into something that seems like a sect and says "don't go"?
- Notice that this "what if..." type question should not be used to avoid the plain teaching that is here:
  - children will submit to their parents - a gift!
  - **mutuality** - responsibility to parent well, responsibly; particular point to the Father here for they would have culturally often been absent, and probably also authoritarian! Such is a precious gift, for it means as a parent not just thinking of your own tiredness or convenience when you are tempted to shout at the kids...

### Slaves and Masters (v.3:22-4:1)

**(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. (4:1) Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.**

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- Culturally remote!
- Why doesn't Paul up-turn the apple-cart a bit more, and say "ban slavery"?
  - **does** - slaves as humans, not as things;
  - **doesn't** - like banning buying things in our society! while there may be big problems with a consumerist, market driven economy from a theoretical point of view, changing it is such a vast, almost incomprehensible task, at best, will require lifetimes of work
- Those principles are there again:
  - work is **given** by the slaves, not demanded by the master;
  - the relationship should be **mutual**, not one-way;
  - **our relationship with the Lord impacts every other part of our lives!**
- Direction of our efforts is towards the Lord, which will lead us to serve other people and not ourselves.
  - the reason we can and should predominantly be serving others is because we are always serving the Lord, following his pattern and priorities.

### Conclusion

- What relationships will you apply these principles to?
  - maybe obvious ones - spouses, parents/children, work colleagues?
  - but we live in a diverse society, in some ways much more varied than Paul's world;
  - maybe we need time to apply these principles of self-giving, mutuality, and "in the Lord" to our different relationships.
- And God's help to do so!