

# Colossians 3 (Part 2):18-25, 4:1 • Authentic Christianity

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The Apostle Paul has taken us on a bit of a journey here throughout these last couple of chapters, talking to us about what it means to genuinely and effectively walk with Jesus Christ. And you'll remember, he's writing this letter to believers. Very important. So many times, we hear things in the Word, and we forget that he's writing to the church. So, when he's talking in these verses, he's not telling us what you need to do to be saved. He's talking to people who are already saved. And so, you need to understand that.

But now, the apostle is writing to them about how to have an authentic Christian life. In other words, how to live an authentic Christian life. To walk it out. What does it mean to have an authentic Christian life? I'm talking about just living a more godly life, being a more Christ-like individual, learning to overcome, walking in the overcoming power of the Spirit over sin and the flesh, and things like that, how to be more like Jesus.

And in the last several verses, he has been exposing the fact that legalism doesn't get the job done. You can't do it through going back to the law as much as some people would like to. I think we just need some more rules. He also talked about how empty spiritualism also doesn't cut it, and the fixation on visions and dreams—and some people are very much connected that way. Let me tell you about this vision I had.

And Paul talked about how those things just don't—they don't change our lives. So, we saw how Paul revealed here in chapter 3 that a true walk with the Lord begins by getting our eyes off earthly things. You remember? Getting our eyes off the things of this world, directing our attention heavenward to the person of Jesus Christ who is seated at the right hand of God, and it is only through Christ, His power, His Spirit working in our lives that we can begin to walk out that authentic Christian existence.

One of the places where we are tested more than any other place is in the home and in the family, in relationships. Right? In our marriage, how we raise our children, how we relate to our children. I mean, that's where kind of the rubber meets the road. Have you ever noticed you can come to church and look all holy? And then on the way home, just everything unravels as you start talking

with your spouse, or the kids are making noise, or somebody's on your last nerve. And it's just—and you just lose it or something, and it's like, you were hearing all this wonderful stuff in church, and then on the way home, it just all kind of comes undone.

Paul is going to speak here in these verses about the relationships that really kind of matter. And it probably would be no surprise to you to hear me say that we need God's help in those family relationships. Yeah, every single day. I think you'd probably also not be at all surprised to learn that the more that our society moves away from biblical principles and an understanding of the Bible and embracing the Judeo-Christian ethic—if that's such a thing—it becomes very clear that the breakdown of the family becomes much more prevalent. And the dismantling of family is such a painful reality.

We get calls at the church office from people who are looking for help—and that happens; nothing wrong with that. I don't take those calls anymore, but I used to, and when people would call and ask for help, we would always kind of ask, are there any family members that you could contact or count on? The stories had some slight variations, but they were always the same. Well, my dad lives in Caldwell, but I haven't talked to him in 10 years. My mother won't take my calls anymore. My brother's been in and out of prison and he's not very reliable. My kids don't talk to me anymore.

It's really sad. It really is. What's amazing to me is how our politicians keep passing laws to remove God from society, and the result is the dismantling of the family, which of course makes it harder on society to make it because the family has been damaged so, so badly.

But I'm not here to talk about politics. What we need to do is we need to look at God's Word, and we need to adjust our families, and think about family relationships and all those sorts of things from the standpoint, or from the perspective of God's Word.

And so, Paul is giving some guidelines here, and he begins by saying in verse 18: *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*

I was kind of joking with Sue. We were talking yesterday and we were having a little—she was—I don't know, she was disagreeing with me about something, which she does a lot. And I just said I want to remind you the first verse I'm covering tomorrow is, wives submit to your husbands. She just laughed at me.

The word that is translated here, “submit,” means to willingly surrender yourself under someone else, okay? To willingly subordinate yourself to someone else's, in this case, leadership, alright? And therefore, what we see here in Colossians is, Paul is telling wives to respond to their husbands with the kind of respect toward him that is due the position that he's been given by the Lord. And so, what that means is, when wives respond to their husbands appropriately, they are respecting Jesus because, you see, the man didn't take that role upon himself. Most men that I know don't want it, or at least they don't feel comfortable walking in it all the time. But yet we are in that position.

And when a woman responds to her husband with that kind of respect, and honors his position in Christ, she honors the Lord who gave it. And of course, our secular society recoils at this word: “submit.” And the whole idea of biblical submission is one that is constantly attacked on the basis of the equality of women, which is really interesting.

When people respond out of an objection to a wife's biblical submission by saying, well, I don't believe in that because I believe women are equal to men, I see that they've missed the whole point. They've missed the whole point of what it frankly means to submit because true submission—listen to me here—true submission does not diminish equality at all, nor does it mar the dignity of what it is to be a woman, and in this case particularly, a wife.

And the reason I say that is because we're all called to submit in some way, shape, or form. But the point, the biggest and most important point, is that Jesus came to this earth to submit to the will of His Father, and in so doing, did not surrender one iota of equality with God.

Do you know that really messes people up? When they read in the gospels about Jesus making statements how I do nothing that I, unless the Father—only see what the Father—I only do what I see the Father doing; I only say what I hear the Father saying. That messes people totally with their minds. And they read those things that Jesus says in the gospel, and they say, well, see there, He wasn't equal to the Father. He said right there, He only does what the Father does. You can only say what the Father—no, that's submission, and submission does not impact equality. It is a willful decision. It's a willful, volitional choice to say, I submit, I am subordinate to you, and I choose to be so without surrendering anything related to my equality to this individual.

How many times have I gone to Philippians 2 to prove my point with you guys? I mean, over the years. I'll do it again. I'll put it up on the screen. Philippians 2: 5–8, Paul writes:

**Philippians 2: 5-8 (ESV)**

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 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...*

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be (demanded, and that's what that word “grasp” means. It means to demand, to hang on to it and to demand my rights, to demand my rights in a thing, okay?), but (rather) 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.*

I want you to notice—look at that passage as you see it there on the screen. First of all, we're told that Jesus Christ, in the form of God, did not consider that equality something to be demanded in terms of His personal rights. But then it goes on to say, He emptied himself, and then you'll notice that passage ends with He humbled himself. And that's—this is a very significant passage. And I know that Philippians was written— not—it was written for men and women, I know that. But the reason I share it today is because it serves as a wonderful reminder to wives about what Jesus did and what the Word of God is encouraging you as wives to do: to not consider your equality with your husband a right to be demanded, but rather, notice what Jesus did, he says, He emptied Himself. It says He humbled Himself—and man, I want to talk to you for a moment.

I want you to see there that the example for your wife—and I'm talking to husbands now, of course— the example for your wife is that Jesus humbled and emptied Himself, and that means it is a volitional act. It was a volitional act on His part; and your wife, it is to be a volitional act on her part. Men are not to say to their wives, you must submit. That's inappropriate. She is to do it willingly. She is to do it as a response of obedience to Jesus, not to you.

And so, her heart is to respond in her love for the Lord toward her husband and the position that he has been given by Jesus to be in that role of headship in the home. And she surrenders to that, willingly, openly, gladly, because this is the work of the Lord.

Now, at this point, there's probably one or two wives out there who are thinking, yeah, here you are using this example of Jesus, but it isn't really apples and apples because Jesus submitted to His Heavenly Father who is perfect, and I

have to submit to this guy, who's anything but—so where does the example kind of go there? Well, it's true. It's true the man— I'm talking to the wives here—the man that you are called to submit to is far from perfect, but I want to remind you that your husband is called to love someone who is no less sinful. It's kind of an equal sort of a deal.

And that's why Paul says in the next verse in verse 19: *Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.*

The word that is given here to husbands—and I want you guys who are married to hear this: the word that is given to you as husband is the balance and the protection that God has factored into families, and particularly into the life of your wife. And it keeps her from harm because you see, any woman, any wife, who is told to submit by a husband, who is unwilling to love as Christ loved the church, is a woman in a very desperate and dangerous situation. And God knows that because she could easily be taken advantage of, used, and abused, but that's not possible if the man, the husband, is also walking in obedience to the Word of God. And he is just as called to this position of obedience as is she. And for his case, it says husbands love your wives.

Paul actually said the same thing when he wrote to the Ephesians. Let me put this also up on the screen for you. Very simple.

**Ephesians 5:25 (ESV)**

*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,*

*Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.* How did Jesus show his love for the church? He gave up his life. He gave up his life. And so, the love of a husband here is marked by the character of a man who is willing to put her first before himself, and he's willing to lay down his life. And I'm not talking about stepping in front of a bullet, okay? How often are you going to get a chance to do that in your married life?

I'm talking about laying down your life on a daily basis. On a daily basis. Laying down your wants, your desires in favor of her, in deference to her, considering her needs first, putting her desires first, her likes and dislikes first before your own. We're meddling now, aren't we? Jesus showed men also an example of how to live this genuine, kind of authentic Christian life in the home by laying down our lives.

Isn't it interesting that Jesus is the example both to the wife and to the husband? Isn't that something? I've always loved that. Jesus is the example to the wife: willing to subordinate Himself, even though He is equal to the Father, knowing and calling a woman to the same thing, even though she is equal to her husband in every way.

And then the example to the man: looking to the man as the leader of the home, saying, I want you to love this woman the way I loved my bride, by being willing to lay down my life for her. And basically, what that translates to is that the means of a husband's love toward his wife is such that she need never fear or suffer from her choice of willingly submitting to his leadership.

Guys, you need to understand this as a husband, as a man. It's a fearful thing for your wife to submit to you. It's a fearful thing because we are incredibly fallible, weak men in many respects, and yet God has called you ladies, you women, you wives, to submit to your husbands. Wow. I have to say I have a great deal of respect for ladies, for women who walk out that calling. I really do. I have a great deal of respect for my wife, who's been called upon by God to walk out that sort of a ministry of submitting to me. I am painfully aware of how many stupid things I've done through the course of our marriage that did not garner her respect—in fact, could have easily lost the respect that she might otherwise have for me.

Now when men hear this call on their side that says, husbands, love your wives, it's very possible that somebody, some man might come and say—in fact, men have—Pastor, there's a problem here. I can't do this, and the reason is because I don't love her anymore. I know it says to love my wife, but the problem is I don't love her anymore.

But you see, that is a misunderstanding of the passage. God is not talking here about the love that you and I express when we say to our wives, I love you. That's not the kind of love that He's telling us to have for her. There are actually several different Greek words that are used to describe love.

I find it interesting in English we just have one word. It's just love. I describe the same sort of emotion for my wife as I describe for pizza. I say to her, honey, I love you. And then she goes, do you want to go out to eat? And I go, yeah, I love pizza. And I've used the exact same word to describe my feeling for my wife and my feeling for pizza. Isn't that awful?

But in the Greek, there were all kinds of different words that are used for love. Paul is not telling—God is not telling men here to love their wives like they

love pizza, or to love their wives even in a romantic sense. He could have used that Greek word. He could have used a more sensual sort of application by saying, husbands, love your wives erotically. That's the word “eros” (ἔρως) in the Greek. He didn't. He used a word that is a form of that word “agape” (ἀγάπη). He said, husband's “agape.” Actually, it's “agapaó” (ἀγαπάω) but it's that kind of unconditional love.

It doesn't matter—see, when a guy comes and says, yeah, well, pastor, I've fallen out of love with my wife. I don't care. Go love your wife. But see, again, that sounds weird from an English standpoint because he said he doesn't love and I'm telling him to go love. God's Word says it's not a matter of romance. It's not a matter of eroticism. It's a matter of unconditional determination on your part to say, I will love you. I choose to love you, right? It's the kind of love that God loves us with, and He's telling husbands to love their wives in that same way.

And if you're looking at me right now with that expression that says, that's hard, then you've understood exactly what I'm saying. Not just hard. I believe, in a fleshly sense, impossible. I believe—in a fleshly, limited to the human ability—I believe it's impossible to love that way, or even for a woman to subordinate herself to a husband in that way without the power of the Spirit, without the power of Jesus. There's another one of those passages: don't try this at home, in the flesh, right?

Unconditional love—wow, how much have we failed, guys? I mean, how much have we failed? Let me count the ways. But it's what we're called to. And we spend the entirety of our married lives attaining to that goal through the power of the Spirit. Jesus, I know I've failed. I even say it to my wife, I know I've failed. But Lord, strengthen me because today is a new day. Strengthen me to love her unconditionally. And that means a love that doesn't benefit me.

Do you know why we love people most of the time? We love people because of what we're going to get out of it. We either love them because it makes us feel good to love, or we love them because we know that they will reciprocate in some way. But “agape” love is a love that is entirely one-sided. It is all for the recipient, right? It brings nothing back to the giver, but they do it willingly. And that's what makes it so challenging because we're intensely selfish people. We do things for selfish reasons. At least I do. And yet God calls me to love my wife in a way that is completely contrary to my flesh and to the self-centered nature, that is, my sinful nature.

Next in verse 20, look in your Bible there: *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*

By the way, before we talk about what this means, the word children in this passage refers to those who are still in their parents' household and under their authority. You with me? This verse is not an excuse for parents to impose their will on their adult children.

The Bible speaks of when a person comes of age, gets married, it says, for this reason, a man will leave his father and mother. And that means to come out from under their authority structure and he will cleave—which is the old King James word—he will be united or made one with his wife, and they will be one flesh, right? And that speaks of that new family unit that is created when a man marries a woman. He is now out from under his parents' authority. He has now created—this new authority structure has been created, this new home, this new family, right? I want to just be very careful here to say that this verse is not a way of twisting your adult kids' arms to get them to do what you want them to do.

And frankly, it's my guess—and I'll tell you that this is my guess, all right—that this verse is not so much spoken to children as it is parents. I mean, even though he says, children, obey your parents—I mean, it's addressed to children, but it is the responsibility of parents to teach their children obedience, and right and wrong, and that sort of thing. And the reason I say that it's more the emphasis on the parent is because the very next comment directs it back to the parent.

Look at verse 21 saying: *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.* Again, we find a very similar passage in Ephesians—up on the screen from Ephesians chapter 6, this time: <sup>4</sup> *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

It's interesting in both passages, he says, fathers don't provoke your children. Do you get the sense that's a very easy thing to do? Do you get the sense that men can provoke kids pretty easily? I think that's true.

And so, the next question is, well, how, guys, do we provoke our children to anger? Well, several ways, I think. But I would say being too harsh with our kids. Being way too harsh. Never expressing affection. You want to provoke your kids and discourage them, don't ever express affection to them. Always criticizing. The dad who looks at the report card says nothing about all the A's but just rails about that one B-minus. That is going to provoke a child to anger



and frustration and discouragement. And I think this is one of the biggies. The dad who never, ever gets around to saying, I was wrong, I'm sorry. That provokes a child. Because see kids grow up eventually. Even though they think you're Superman when they're little, they grow up and they learn different.

And it's not terribly long before they begin to realize that you are a fallible human being. And when they see that you never admit it, or confess it or ask for forgiveness because of it, they begin to see you as a phony and it's a provocation on our part. I've told people—and I say this in pre-marriage counseling because we go over some of these verses in pre-marriage counseling— but I tell people and I'll say it here too. I think one of the most important things I did as a father to my four children was just simply apologize when I messed up because I had lots of opportunities to apologize. And you know what? They always forgave me. That's funny about kids. They always forgave me. They never once withheld their love and forgiveness.

The next word is given to servants, verse 22: *Bondservants, 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.*

Let me just explain. A bondservant, first of all, was a servant who, after a period of time of being a servant, made the decision again—this is a willful decision on their part—a volitional decision to be a servant for life to the person to whom they were serving.

And we don't do bondservants today. I mean, a more modern application here would be an employee. But Paul is saying that, as a Christian, if you are working for someone, you have a higher calling than the unsaved people who are also working. Perhaps at the place where you work, you have a higher calling because you are not just an employee of that business, you are a servant of the Lord, and you are a representative of Him personally. And so, he says, work hard for your boss, not just when they're looking, not just when the boss is around. Work hard all the time. Give your boss a fair day's labor.

And then he enlarges on this idea. He says in verse 23: *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,<sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*

Now, this is a fascinating verse because what it says is that how you work in your job and the diligence that you show in your job can actually come back. And it doesn't just honor the Lord, but there's an inheritance aspect to—I mean, an internal inheritance aspect to how you work diligently today for your boss.

Isn't that something? That just blows my mind! See, you thought you were working for a paycheck and that was all. God's Word is saying here that He keeps track of how you work for your boss, and there's a reward for diligence and hard work in heaven. That's a savings program, folks. Right there. Yeah.

But then in verse 25, he speaks of the opposite of a reward: *For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.* Now again, just remember here, Paul is talking to Christians. He's talking to Christian servants. So don't think of the payback here in terms of hellfire and loss of salvation. He's not talking—it's not what he's trying to say. Don't look at this verse and go, oh no. He's making the point that good or bad, God sees everything that we do, and He responds without partiality. He rewards diligence and yeah, there's disciplinary action upon His children when there is a lack thereof of those sorts of things.

And then the final verse that we're looking at here is actually in chapter 4, verse 1, and it says: *Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.* Of course, this verse belonged to chapter 3. I'm not sure why they separated it, but now we're just looking at the modern application, which would be employers.

We have several business owners in our fellowship, and so this is kind of a word to you. You're exhorted to respond to your employees as the Lord would respond or as the Lord has responded to you. If God has shown you grace, then you show grace. If God has shown you forgiveness, then you extend forgiveness. And masters, or in this case for us employers, are reminded that they, too, have a master over them, and that is the Lord to whom they must answer.

Now, I want to kind of end with some comments here that I feel like—I feel kind of compelled to give because, to be honest with you, the apostle Paul's remarks here about masters and slaves, and stuff like that, they're not just Paul's but there are other references in the New Testament. This really causes some real problems for some people. I just want you to know that if you haven't run into it yet. I have actually heard people ask the question, why didn't the apostle Paul, or frankly, any of the other biblical writers, denounce slavery in any form and use the platform that they were given by God to bring about social change? Why didn't they do that?

Why does Paul talk about, talk to slaves, and then talk to masters, and doesn't say anything about setting your slaves free? Didn't Paul consider slavery wrong? I mean, we're just, we're incensed with this. It assaults my sensibilities.

And I read verses like this and I'm like, what's the problem? Wasn't this man socially aware? I mean why doesn't he say anything?

And the very simple answer to that question is— although some of you may not like it—it wasn't his calling. It quite simply wasn't his calling. God did not call the apostle Paul to effect social change. God called the apostle Paul to preach the gospel, to raise up churches as an apostle.

That's what God called him to do, and he was true to that calling. He was faithful. In fact, at the end of his life, he wrote to Timothy, and he said, I have run the race. I've kept the faith and now there awaits for me the crown of righteousness. And Paul knew that he had been faithful to his calling.

Now, I'll grant you, there have been other Christians throughout the centuries who have had different callings and some of them have been to affect social change. I don't know how much you know about your history and particularly how Christians play into that. But there's men like William Wilberforce, who in Britain was, I mean, an incredible man, worked tirelessly for the abolition of the slave trade. And Wilberforce was a committed follower of Jesus Christ.

And of course, there were many people here in the States, believers who did the same thing. And I applaud them. I applaud each and every one of them for what they did. They responded not just to the need for social reform within their country, but they responded to the calling of the Spirit to serve in that particular arena. And it was probably—I'm sure it wasn't a popular one or fun, but they did it because they felt the call of the Lord.

Now, here's the problem. When the Lord burdens a heart with some kind of a passion for ministry—and He does this, of course, all the time—we, as the receivers of that ministry, we open our hearts to what the Lord has called us to, and we respond, hopefully we respond out of obedience. But if we're going to be honest with ourselves, deep down, we struggle with the question of why others don't share our passion. And it happens all the time. People who are gifted with serving or the ministry of helps—and I love those people—are often very frustrated about why other people aren't getting up and helping. And sometimes they'll even come to me and kind of express their frustration. Pastor Paul, why are some of these other people, I mean, we need help. We're doing this work and we're trying to serve and stuff like that.

But the same thing happens— those who have the gift of evangelism, they're frustrated about why other people don't seem to share the same passion for sharing their faith that they have because they've received that passion, that

burden from the Lord. And it's a very powerful sort of a thing in their hearts, and they've embraced it, but they're looking at you like, you bum, get off your chair. Get out and share Jesus with somebody. Well, we have to remember that the Lord calls us to different ministries, and that's okay. And you can't demand that everybody have the same passion and the same burden as you.

Let me show you this reminder from Romans chapter 12 on the screen. We'll end with this:

**Romans 12:4-6 (ESV)**

*For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;*

*For as in one body (Paul writes) we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, (so) let us use them ... in proportion to our faith.*

Paul just reminds us and says, hey, we've all been given different gifts. We don't all have the same function. Don't expect people to have the same passion that you have. If you have a passion for evangelism, get out and evangelize, connect yourself with people who have a like passion and encourage them to do the same. But if somebody has the ministry of helps, they've got a different calling. If somebody has the ministry of giving, they've got a different calling. If somebody has the ministry of teaching, they have a different calling. And it's okay for them to be passionate about their own calling and to be about the work that the Holy Spirit has led them and gifted them to be able to carry out, without feeling guilty for another people who think that everybody ought to be just like them.

But that's what we do. I'm a mouth; you should all be a mouth. And Paul would say, well then, where would the sense of smell be? Right? It's wonderful that we are very diverse in our giftings in the body of Christ because we need one another. The mouth needs the nose. The nose needs the eyes. The eyes need the hands. The hands need the feet, and on and on it goes.