

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Colossians 3:18-4:1**.
- B. Faith in JC not only changes individuals; it also changes homes. In this section, Paul addressed himself to family members: husbands, wives, and children. And then to those who were servants and masters in their employment.
- C. God created the three great institutions of the world: family, government, and the church. He wants us to know how to live in all three.
- D. One of the greatest things we can do as individuals to strengthen our nation is to help build godly homes. Paul addressed the various members of the family and pointed out the factors that make for a strong and godly home.

I. HUSBANDS AND WIVES: LOVE AND SUBMISSION (Col. 3:18-19).

- A. God does all things “decently and in order” (1Cor. 14:40).
If He did not have a chain of command in society, we would have chaos. The fact that the woman is to submit to her husband does not suggest that the man is better than the woman. It only means that the man has the responsibility of headship and leadership in the home.
- B. Headship is not dictatorship or lordship.
It is servant leadership. In fact, both the husband and the wife must be submitted to the Lord and to each other (Eph. 5:21). It is mutual respect under the lordship of JC.
- C. True spiritual submission is the secret of growth and fulfillment.
While it is true that in JC “there is neither male nor female” (Gal. 3:28), it is also true that joyful submission is an evidence that the wife belongs to JC.
- D. The husband has the responsibility of loving his wife.
The word for “love” used here is *agape*--the sacrificing, serving, selfless love that X shares with His church. A marriage may begin with normal, human, romantic love (*phileo*), but it must grow deeper into the spiritual *agape* love that comes only from God (see Eph. 5:18ff).
- E. A special word of warning for the husbands.
“And be not bitter against them” (3:19). Husbands must not harbor ill will because of something their wives did or did not do. A good and loving husband will not act harshly or “throw his weight around” in the home.
- F. The wife will submit to her husband.
The wife will have little difficulty submitting to her husband, if she knows he is acting in her best interest. He seeks the very best for her, and will not do anything to harm her. The husband’s love for his wife is seen in his sacrifice for her.
- G. Where do we get the power to love and to submit? From the Lord.
A happy marriage does not come automatically; it must be worked at all the time. If we live to please X first, others second, and ourselves last, we will build strong marriages and spiritual homes.

II. PARENTS AND CHILDREN: ENCOURAGEMENT AND OBEDIENCE (Col. 3:20-21).

- A. Children have responsibilities.
Their foremost responsibility is to obey. They are to obey “in all things” and not simply in those things that please them.
- B. Obedience means respect for authority.
The child who does not learn to obey his parents is not likely to grow up obeying any authority. He will defy his teachers, the police, his employers, and anyone else who tries to exercise authority (including God). The breakdown in authority in our society reflects the breakdown of authority in the home.

- C. Parents should practice self-discipline.
Parents who cannot discipline themselves cannot discipline their children. If a father and mother are not *under* authority themselves, they cannot *exercise* authority over others. It is only as parents submit to each other and to the Lord that they can exercise properly balanced spiritual and physical authority over their children.
- D. Do not provoke your children.
“Provoke not your children” (3:21) is a commandment to parents, and how often it is disobeyed! Too often, parents automatically say *no* when their children ask for something, when the parents should listen carefully and evaluate each request.
- E. Fathers and mothers should encourage their children.
Encourage them, do not discourage them. Parents also need to have a listening ear, loving heart, and a patient spirit as their children talk to them.
- F. Discouraged children are fair prey for Satan and the world.
When a child does not get “ego-strength” at home, he/she will seek it elsewhere. It is a pity that some Xian parents do not help their children develop their personalities, their gifts, and their skills.

III. **MASTERS AND SERVANTS: HONESTY AND DEVOTION (Col. 3:22-4:1).**

- A. Why didn't the church of the 1st century openly oppose slavery and seek to destroy it?
 1. The church was a minority group that had no political power to change an institution that was built into the social order.
 2. The purpose of the church is to spread the gospel and win souls, not to get involved in social action. Had the 1st century Xians been branded as an anti-government sect, they would have been greatly hindered in their soul-winning efforts.
 3. Paul's example with Philemon is compelling because he did not advise Philemon to treat his runaway slave severely, but to receive him as a brother. In fact, Onesimus, still a slave, was one of the men who carried this letter to the Colossians (4:9).
- C. The slave had a choice.
Under Christianity, a slave could remain a slave or gain his freedom, either is acceptable in X (1Cor. 7:21).
- D. Slaves are to obey their masters.
A Xian slave owed complete obedience to his master as a ministry to the Lord. The slave strived to do a better job because he was a Xian.
- E. This is the positive side of obedience.
Servants were to obey to please God, not just to avoid punishment. If the master did not commend them, their reward is from X (3:23,24).
- F. These principles apply to any kind of honest employment.
In our society we do not have slaves like we did during the early 1800's. A Xian worker ought to be the best worker on the job. He ought to obey orders and not argue. He is serving X and not the boss only. He ought to work whether anybody is watching or not.
- G. It is sometimes difficult.
It can be difficult for a Xian to obey God and hold his job in today's complex, competitive world. But he must obey God just the same and trust Him for what he needs.
- H. Masters have responsibilities too.
Paul admonished the Xian masters to treat their servants with fairness and honesty. This was a new idea to Roman masters because they considered their slaves as “things,” and not people.
- I. The gospel did not destroy slavery, but it changed the relationship between slave and master.
The Xian master was to treat his slave like a person and like a brother in X (Gal. 3:28). He was not to mistreat him; he was to deal with his slave justly and fairly. After all, the Xian slave was free in the Lord, and the master was a slave to X (1Cor. 7:22).

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. Three very powerful relationships: husband/wife, parents/children, slave/master.
- B. And now we know how to live in all three!
- C. Jesus is the all-sufficient One in every aspect of life.
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring-Xians.