

slave from Colossae whom he had converted. Onesimus was now one of the men who carried this letter to Colossae! (Col 4:9)

A Christian servant owed complete obedience to his master, as to the Lord. If a Christian servant had a Christian master, that servant was not to take advantage of his master because they were brothers in the Lord. If anything, the servant strived to do a better job because he was a Christian and gave his full devotion to his master. His work was done heartily, not grudgingly, and as to the Lord and not to men. "Ye serve the Lord Christ" (3:24).

In our society we don't have slaves, but we can apply these principles to any kind of honest employment. A Christian worker ought to be the best worker on the job. He ought to obey orders and not argue. He ought to serve Christ and not the boss only, and he ought to work whether anybody is watching or not. If he follows these principles, he will receive his reward from Christ even if his earthly master (his boss) does not recognize him or reward him.

Just as the husbands and wives and parents and children have mutual and reciprocal responsibilities so do masters and servants. Paul admonished the Christian masters to treat their servants with fairness and honesty. This would be a new idea to "masters" of Paul's day. Masters had almost total control over their slaves and could do with them whatever they pleased.

[Q-8 How would you describe today a "Christian boss"?)

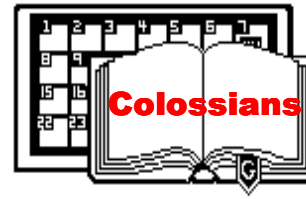
The Gospel did not immediately destroy slavery, but it did gradually change the relationship between slave and master. He was to treat his servant like a person and like a brother in Christ (Gal. 3:28). He was not to mistreat him, he was to deal with his slave justly and fairly. After all, the Christian slave was a free man in the Lord, and the master was a slave to Christ (I Cor. 7:22).

[Q-9 How was a slave "free" and a master a "slave" in Christ? ]

## CONCLUSION

As we review this very practical section of Colossians, we see once again the preeminence of Jesus Christ in our lives. Christ must be the Head of the home. This series of admonitions is actually a practical application of Colossians 3:17 "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." It is by His will and authority that we should live in our daily relationships. If He is the preeminent One in our lives, then we will love each other, submit to each other, obey, and treat one another fairly in the Lord.

1. What is the theme of the book of Colossians?
2. Give a three part outline of Colossians?



# COLOSSIANS

## Lesson # 5

### The Preeminence of Christ: At Home and At Work

Text: Colossians 3:18-4:1

The Gospel of Christ not only changes individuals; it also changes homes. In this section Paul addressed himself to family members; husbands and wives, children, and household servants. It seems clear that all these people being addressed were Christians and the apostle appeals to all of them to live to please Jesus Christ.

The first institution God founded on earth was the home (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:1-6). As goes the home, so goes society and the nation. One of the greatest things we can do as individuals is help to build godly Christian homes. Paul addressed the various members of the family and pointed out the ingredients that make for a strong and godly home.

#### I. Husbands and Wives: Love and Submission -- 3:18-19.

The Gospel radically changed the position of women in the world. It gave them a new freedom and stature that some of them were unable to handle, and for this reason Paul admonished them (See also Eph 5:18f, I Pet. 3:1ff).

[Q-1 How were women regarded in many of the societies before the time of Christ? ]

We must not think of submission as "slavery" or "subjugation." The word comes from the military vocabulary and simply means "to arrange under rank." The fact that one soldier is a private and another is a colonel does not mean that one man is necessarily "better" than the other. It only means that they have different ranks, different responsibilities and obligations.

God does all things "decently and in order" (I Cor. 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.

[Q-2 Why does the E.R.A. repudiate this? ]

The position of the husband is not a dictatorship; it is a loving leadership. In fact, both the husband and the wife must be submitted to the "Lord" and to "each other" (Eph. 5:21). It is a mutual respect under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The husband has the responsibility of loving his wife; and the word for "love" used is "agape"-- the sacrificing, serving love that Christ shares with His church. A marriage may begin with romantic love, but it must grow deeper into the spiritual "agape" love like that of God. In the parallel passage (Eph. 5:18ff) Paul made it clear that the husband must love his wife "even as Christ loved the church." Christ gave His all for the church! The measure of a man's love for his wife is not seen only in gifts or words, but in acts of sacrifice and concern for her happiness and welfare.

In Colossians 3:19 Paul added a special word of warning for the husbands: "and be not bitter against them." Husbands must be careful not to harbor ill-will toward their wives because of something they did nor did not do. A "root of bitterness" in a home can poison the marriage relationship and give Satan a foothold (Heb. 12:15; Eph. 4:31).

[Q-3 Is a marriage a 50/50 relationship? ]

A happy marriage does not come automatically; it is something that must be worked at all the time. As we walk with Christ in submission to Him, we have no problem submitting to one another and seeking to serve one another.

## II. Parents and Children: Encouragement and Obedience -- 3:20-21

There were children in these Christian homes, and Paul addressed part of his letter to them. A great deal is being said about the rights of children and they "do" have rights. One of them is the right to be born into a dedicated Christian home where they will be raised in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

[Q-4 What are children's rights "to be born"? ]

They have the right to have godly parents who will teach them the Word of God and discipline them in love. John H. Starkey was a violent British criminal. He murdered his own wife, then was convicted for the crime and executed. The officials asked William Booth to conduct Starkey's funeral. Booth faced as ugly and mean a crowd as he had ever seen in his wife, but his first words stopped them and held them: "John H. Starkey never had a praying mother!"

[Q-5 What are some things parents should be praying for their children?]

Children have rights, but they also have responsibilities; and their foremost responsibility is to obey. They are to obey "in all things" and not simply in those things that please themselves. 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 over him. The breakdown in authority in our society reflects the breakdown of authority in the home.

For the most part, children do not "create" problems; they "reveal" them. 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.

[Q-6 Where do you think parents today are failing? ]

The word "fathers" in v.21 could be translated "parents" as it is in Hebrews 11:23. Paul made it clear that parents must make it as easy as possible for children to obey. "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.

Fathers and mothers should encourage their children, not discourage them. Life is not easy for children. Their problems might seem small to us but they are quite large to them! Discouraged children are fair prey for Satan and the world! Christian parents must help their children develop their personalities, their gifts, and their skills and teach them to use such for God.

## III. Masters and Servants: Honesty and Devotion -- 3:22-4:1

Slavery was an established institution in Paul's day. At least half of the people were slaves. Many of them were well-educated who carried great responsibilities in the homes of the wealthy. In many homes, the slaves helped to educate and discipline the children.

Paul was careful to instruct Christian slaves to secure their freedom if they could (I Cor. 7:21); but he did not advocate rebellion or the overthrow of the existing order.

You will remember that the Book of Colossians was one of the four letters that came from Paul's Roman imprisonment.

[Q-7 What were the other three epistles? ]

In fact, much of Paul's recent dealings had been with Onesimus, a run-away