

IX. Colossians
The Preeminence and Prominence of Jesus Christ
“Clothed in Christ at Home and at Work”
Colossians 3:18–4:1
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August 27, 2023 • Sunday Evening Sermon

Colossians is such a rich book that takes us into the preeminence and the prominence of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and lifts up Christ. In our study of Colossians 1 we saw how Christ is preeminent in creation and redemption. He's eternal God. He's our sufficient Savior. In Colossians 2 we saw who Christ is and what He's done for us – that great Gospel is not by works but by grace alone and in Christ alone that we're saved. What a wonderful salvation we have!

In Colossians 3 we see the application of those great truths starting to play out. In the last study we saw the formula of our sanctification, of how live out the Christian life. At the beginning of Colossians 3, it tells us that we have been raised with Christ. We died in Christ, and now we're raised in Christ. We're alive in Christ. Then it goes on to tell us two great key exhortations because those two exhortations are going to flow from Colossians 3 and it's going to need to be applied all the way through the end of the book. Those two exhortations are to seek the things of Christ and then two set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth. He's forgiven us all our sins. He's given us His great righteousness. These are clear instructions for us to follow and live out.

The formula told us how we do that. It's to put off and to put on. We're to put off the old man, we're to put to death and mortify any sin. We're to put away those things that were of the old life, the things of the earth and have nothing to do with them. We're to put on as chosen, holy and beloved ones of Christ, the things of Christ. The word pictures is actually putting on or putting off clothing. As I thought about that, I had two different Bible stories that came to mind about taking off and putting on clothes.

One is that story of Jesus's best friend, Lazarus. In John 11 Lazarus has died and Jesus waited four days to go to him and his sisters. His sisters couldn't understand why. They questioned Jesus saying “Why didn't you come? You could have healed him.” That's when it said, ‘Jesus wept.’ Jesus came to the tomb where Lazarus was buried, and Lazarus had been dead for days. Then Jesus says “Lazarus, come forth” and Lazarus did. Jesus brought him back to life, from the dead. He made him alive. It says in that passage that Lazarus came out with the grave clothes on. Those grave clothes weighed about 75 to 100 pounds. Can you see Lazarus trying to come out wrapped in them? Jesus yelled out to those around him “Unbind him, take those grave clothes off. They're not fitting for him anymore. He's alive. Take off those stinking, grave clothes and leave them aside.”

The second story that came to my mind was that of the lost son or what many know as the prodigal son. This son took his inheritance and went and squandered it. Then he found himself with the pigs and in the pigsty and nothing to eat. He said, “I'll go home. At least my dad's servants are eating better and have a better life than I do.” So, he made his way home. When he was a far off his father saw him, ran to him, hugged him and he kissed him. Then he yelled out, “Bring the best robe to put on my son and put a ring on his hand.” This ring would have signified who he was – he was his son. He put shoes on his feet and clothed his son.

Like these two stories, God called you and me just like he did Lazarus. If you're saved He called you and said, “Come forth” and He gave you the faith to trust in Jesus as your Lord and

Savior. You were dead, but now you're alive in Christ. In the story of the lost son, the father placed the best robe ever upon him. Christ has taken His robe of righteousness and He has put it on you if you know Him as Savior. He has enveloped you with that beautiful robe of the righteousness of Christ and you have the ring where you are His and you're sealed with Him forever by that Holy Spirit. We're to wear these clothes. Those grave clothes don't fit us anymore which we are to put those off, and we're immediately to put on the clothes of righteousness, the clothes of Christ.

In the last study we looked at the three exhortations which set up this study and we need to have those in our minds as we continue on in this passage. The first exhortations was to let the peace of Christ rule in your lives. In this study we will be talking about putting on the clothes of Christ in our home and the clothes of Christ in our work. We need the let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, at our homes, at our work. The next exhortation was we are to let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. We need to let that Word of Christ dwell in us richly at our homes, in our relationships and in our work with our relationships there. The third exhortation was we are to do everything in word and deed in the name of Christ. We need to make sure that the Lord Jesus Christ is Lord over all and in everything we do and say with thanksgiving unto the Lord is done unto Him in our home and also at our work. God has called us to put on these clothes of Christ, and that's why He moves right where life is lived at the home and work.

There's six different roles that we're going to walk through in this passage from Colossians 3 and those are the role of the wife, the husband, children, fathers which be expanded to parents, bond servants which would include employees in our application and masters which would include the employer's application. So, we're to clothe ourselves. Let's start by looking at the home as we look at our passage for this study.

The home is covered in Colossians 3:18-21 which says [18] *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.* [19] *Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.* [20] *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.* [21] *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.* This passage begins with the wife and the husband. It's very to the point. It's really a very brief commandment to us where Scripture picks these two exhortations.

Pastor Reeder's sermon on this takes us back to the fall of man and the curse that was placed on them. Genesis 3:16 says [16] *To the woman He said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you."* After the fall, the wife's desire was going to be to have that place or have control or have the role that the husband was given by God. The wife's temptation will be to rule over the husband. The husband's temptation was going to be to have ungodly rule, to be tyrannizing. Pastor Reeder said the root word for rule here was to tyrannize, to bully, to intimidate his wife. These are our temptations when we are not putting on the clothes of Christ and living like the world or the old man within us.

According to this text the clothes of the wife are to submit to her husband which is fitting in the Lord. What does this mean? The concept of submitting here is placing oneself willingly in subjection to another. So, a Christian wife is to place herself willingly in subjection to her husband, and she will resist that temptation to control or take that role in the home and in that relationship. Ephesians 5 is a parallel passage to this one in Colossians. Ephesians 5 gives a little more insight to this one.

Ephesians 5:22-24 says [22] *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* [23]

For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. God's teaching here is that this is creation order. This is God in His wisdom, seeing that the home needed a leader and needed order. God set the husband up to be the head – the headship of the home and the wife is to submit to that leadership willingly.

What does it not mean? It doesn't mean that she is to submit to all men but it means to her own husband. It doesn't mean that she's inferior. According to the Scriptures, man and woman were created in the image of God and there is no distinction in the sense of superiority and inferiority. It is simply a role that God has given in the family. It also doesn't mean unconditional submission, because if the wife is charged or told by her husband or instructed to do anything that's a sin, anything against God's will, she would obey God over her husband. It does mean that by our Great Designer, our Lord God Almighty, is that the husband would be the leader of the family. It goes onto say in Colossians 3:18 that it's fitting in the Lord. It's pleasing unto the Lord. It is right, true and just according to the Lord. It's His will.

In Colossians 3:19 He moves to the husband where husbands are to love their wives and not be harsh with them. The word for love used in this verse is agape. That's the divine love, the Christ love, the God love. That is the love that only God can do in and through us with someone else and it is self-sacrificial, selfless and affectionate. Ephesians 5 again gives us some good insight on this as well. Ephesians 5:25-28 says *[25] Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. [28] In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.*

The husband is called by God to agape, to love our wives in the Lord. We're called to the highest standard there is. The standard is the standard of Christ. We're to love our wife as Christ loved us. He loved the church. That's our standard. How do we do that? Here's a few thoughts on how we're to love our wives, men. If you're married, we're to love with a sacrificial love. This is self-denial. The Bible says Jesus laid down His life for you and for me. He died on the cross for us and laid down His life willingly. We're to lay down our life for our wife. We're to serve her, to help her, to put her interests above our own. We're to lay down our lives and die to ourself every day.

A second thing is, it's a protecting and encouraging love. We're to protect and encourage our wives in her spiritual growth to protect her from the world's lies, to be aware and alert of our wife's needs and to do everything we can to help meet those needs. If she needs encouragement, we're to encourage her. If she needs a listening ear, we're to listen. If she needs strength, we're to give her strength. God's called us to love our wives with a protecting and encouraging love. God's called us to love our wives with a caring love. Ephesians said husbands are to love their wives as their own body so we are to nourish and cherish her. This concept is unlimited caring, a continuous and unlimited caring for our wife to cherish her with a tender love and with affection, with comfort, protection and security. Your wife should know that you cherish her more than anybody or anything else on this earth outside of God and Christ Himself. She should know that she is your most cherished relationship. You should champion her.

This verse in Colossians says for the husband not to be harsh with her. That means don't be easily irritated. Don't be impatient. Don't be embittered. Instead, be patient. Be understanding and be caring. Then also this love is a hold fast love. It's the steadfast love of the Lord that

endures forever. We are to love our wife with a steadfast love, a hold fast love. The Bible tells us to leave and cleave where we leave the bonds of our parents and we cleave to our wife. That concept means as a couple you are cemented to, unable to be separated. It is a strong bond that we're to have with our wife and we're to live like that. In the book of Malachi, God says he hates divorce. Mark 10:6-9 says [6] *But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'* [7] *'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, [8] and the two shall become one flesh.'* So they are no longer two but one flesh. [9] *What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.*” Men, we're to love our wife with a hold fast love and it doesn't matter what we're feeling for we're committed till death do us part.

Then husbands, our love is to be a servant love. We're to provide servant leadership. Yes, God's called us to lead our family but that leading is the leading of Christ. Christ came to serve and He led with a towel. He washed His disciples' feet. He told them and He tells us to serve one another. You serve her by praying faithfully for every day, by walking by faith and walking with her by faith through life in life's challenges. You do this as you walk with the Lord each day of your life and then helping her walk with the Lord each day of her life that you would be there to help her grow spiritually. Maybe you have young children so do what you need to do to help her have time with Jesus or to get to a Bible study, but serve your wife with that selfless servant agape love. Husbands were to put on these Christ clothes.

Next Paul moves to children to clothe themselves with the clothes of Christ. What does it look like? Colossians 3:20 says for children to obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord. My wife, Belinda and I raised four children. One day she was playing with one of our children in their room, and they reached over to get something that they weren't supposed to be playing with or do. She said “No, don't do that.” They looked at her and did it again. She said, ‘no, don't do that. You're not supposed to play with that and you don't need to.’ Then they looked at her and said, “I in charge.” She said, ‘No, I'm in charge.’ This little one looked back at her and in the eyes, “I in charge.” My wife thought ‘this has to be settled now, because if I don't settle it when they're three, it's going to be terrible later.’ There was this standoff, but the little one's hearts often softened and looked at her and said, “you're in charge.”

That's how we are. When we're born, we're born into sin and we want to be in charge. We want to be the one who calls the shots in our lives and that means we are rebellious. It takes God's work of grace to cause us to not be rebellious and to live submitted to Christ and to one another. Having four children is a challenge and that's why God says ‘children, obey your parents for this is pleasing’ and that is to obey in everything. It is a command. There are two important words here – listen and under. Children, you're to listen to your parents and live under their authority, do what they tell you to do. If you're commanded to do something that would hurt you or that is against God's Word, then you would not do that. You would follow God rather than man. Then it says to obey ‘in everything for it pleases the Lord.’ When children obey their parents, it pleases God. It is God's will for children to obey their parents.

Then this passage moves on to fathers. Again, in the Christian family, the father is the head and so this can be applied to all parents. Here is the amplified Bible version of Colossians 3:21; [21] *Fathers, do not provoke or irritate or fret your children [do not be hard on them or harass them], lest they become discouraged and sullen and morose and feel inferior and frustrated. [Do not break their spirit.]* This word discouraged means to dishearten, to break the spirit, to dismay, to sadden. We are called not to do that. That's what we're putting off. We're putting off provoking our children and discouraging them.

Here's a few ways that fathers in particular and parents in general can discourage their children, not all of them, just a few. It is by being irritable with them all the time, being impatient, quick tempered, having too high of expectations, demanding your own way for your own good, overly strict, overly controlling, overly protected, or on the other side, disengaged, neglecting them or failing to show any affection for your children. These things are provoking our children and they would discourage our children. Again, let's read a parallel text in Ephesians 6:4 which says *[4] Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

There's what we're to put on. We are to put on to bringing them up in the discipline of the Lord, instructing them with the instructions of the Lord and teaching them the Gospel, teaching them the Word of God, to encouraging them to know the triune God and know His great Gospel as we build them up in Christ. Parent in love and I'd encourage you to read I Corinthians 13:4-7 and then ask God to help you see how to apply that to your parenting. Parent your children in being spirit filled by the Holy Spirit and having the fruit of the Spirit. Read Galatians 5:16-23 so that you would parent your child with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness with faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Don't parent in the flesh. Then parent by training your child in the Lord. Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and pick out some applications of how you can train your children in the Lord. Then parent our children with the golden rule – do unto your child as you would have them do unto you. I was amazed how many times I would say that and how it changed what I was about to do or say. Would I want my child to say that to me that way? No, so we're to apply the golden rule in our parenting.

These Christ clothes now move from the home to the workplace, and in particular in this passage to bond servants and masters. During the time Colossians was written in the Roman Empire and there in Colossae about one third to one half of all the people living there were bond servants. Many had become Christians, and many of the masters now were becoming Christians. So the Scriptures are teaching these Christian bond servants and Christian masters, how to do this. How do you live this way in a pagan culture that is against God's will?

Colossians 3:22-25 says *[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. [23] Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, [24] knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. [25] For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.*

The Gospel had spread and as I said, many had come to know Christ and even in Colossians 3:11, it said there was not Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all. So now they're faced with this. The bond servant and the master, the employee and the employer are now brothers and sisters in Christ. They're now in the same family of God. They're now equal in every way and in the church. So how do they live? For us this is more of a profession as the employee/employer but I will flip back and forth a little bit between bond servants and masters and employee/employer so we get that application.

The first imperative here is to obey in everything. This word obey is that same word that is used when the child was told to obey their parents. So it's an all inclusive to put yourself under and to do everything they tell you to do. Again, we would not do as an employee anything that would be unlawful, anything that be against Scripture but outside of that, we're to obey our

master in every single thing, whether we like to do it or not. If they tell us to do it, we're to do it. This is pleasing to the Lord.

Then it says we are to do not as eye service as people pleasers. Do not only work hard when your boss is looking. That's what this is saying. You know what this means, right? It's like in school gym class when all the students were told to do push ups and when the coach wasn't looking you didn't really do them but when he turns your way you start doing them as perfectly as you can. This is where you only did push ups when he was looking your way and that's what this is talking about. We're to do our work as unto the Lord and He says, 'Don't do it for men. Do it for Christ.' I remember Pastor Reeder would say this often; 'we're to live with an audience of one' and that's the Lord. That's how we're to live. That's how we're to work with an audience of One for the Lord. We work unto the Lord.

Also, our work is done with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. That sincerity of heart means with all of your heart. You're doing it with a good attitude and you're doing it with your whole self unto Him. We're doing it with reverence because we're doing it unto the Lord. And we're to do our work heartily unto Him, not for men. This means literally, whatever you do, put your soul into it, put everything you have within you. I remember when I was in college and on a summer beach project with Campus Outreach to Panama City Beach and you have to get a job as you do training for outreaches and Bible studies. I got a job at the Holiday Inn as a busboy. I learned a lot about how nasty people can be at their tables. I thought 'what do they do at home? I mean, why do they leave all this stuff here?'

I remember just wrestling with it and then I read this passage after a couple of weeks and God just convicted me that I needed to apply this to my job. I thought, 'how can I do that?' I prayed through it and I had the idea, I'm going to clean every table as if Jesus Christ is going to sit there next. That changed my attitude. I wanted it to be so clean and nice and I want to treat them that way. What kind of attitude do I have if Jesus is coming by to eat? It was a lot different than where I was, so I had to confess my sin and repent. I learned a great lesson then on how am I to work with all my soul for the Lord and that's what he's saying here that we're to do. When we work with all our soul unto the Lord the menial tasks become sacred, the trivial tasks become noble, and our work becomes an act of worship unto the Lord.

Then we move to Colossians 3:24 and 25, where it tells us there will be a reward for your work, good or bad. You will be rewarded for what you do on this earth, good or bad. Colossians 3:24-25 says *[24] knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. [25] For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.* The bold print here tells us it's guaranteed that you will receive an inheritance as a reward in our serving is Him.

Kent Hughes in his commentary on this Colossians passage said this; "The reward will be good or bad, depending upon your performance. All believers, though, under the ultimate forgiveness of Christ, will have their works judged, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." So, this message is for all of us. It's really for the master as well as for the bond servant or for the employer, as well as the employee. We all are guaranteed that however we treat others or how we serve them or how we serve God in our work, that we will receive that reward back. Christians should be the best workers, right? Absolutely. If we're serving Christ in everything we do at work, we should be the most dependable, the most diligent, the highest integrity with the best attitudes. Christians are to be the best employees there are.

Then it moves on to the masters in Colossians 4:1 which says *[1] Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. Have just expectations on your employees, masters, and pay them a just wage, take care of them, treat them right for they are your brother and sister in Christ and it's right unto the Lord. Treat them fairly as well that they would be treated and do unto them as you would have them do to you. That's a good way to treat them fairly. Then it says that the bond servant and the master have the same Lord. Remember this as also whether you are an employee or the employer – you both have the same Lord. It says knowing that you also have a Master in heaven and you're under Him. We are all to serve Christ and we're to do all things unto the Lord. Masters you are to do your work and to take care of your employees as Christ would us.*

As we put on these Christ clothes in these six different roles – wives, husbands, children, fathers (parents), bond servants/employees, and masters/employers – you will have an incredible impact. Think about how much time is spent where you live and work. Almost all of it, right? So, if we put on the clothes of Christ, His righteousness, and we put on the things Christ and wherever we are in particular in our home, as we interact with our spouse and our children, or with our parents, then that's how God's going to be honored. If at work, when we can interact with our boss or our boss with us, or the boss with our employees, then that's going to honor Christ. It's adorning yourselves with the doctrine of God when you do that – it's putting on Christ's clothes. Love and peace will fill your home and your workplace. People will know that you are a disciple of Christ by your love for one another.

When you follow these Scriptures, you're going to be different. We're in a pagan culture and the world is just different. When you live this way, people will know something's different. You will have evangelistic opportunities to share your faith. People will come to know Christ. That's what was happening in the Roman Empire. People were living this way and people were coming to know Christ. The Gospel will multiply as we live this way in our home and at work and God will be glorified. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for Your blessings. Thank You, Father, that You are such a good Father and that You love us dearly and You care for us so well. Thank You that You have given us Your Word to feed our souls and to conform us more into the image of Christ. You've given us Your Word that we might glorify You and that we might be able to be light in darkness that will shed a light in our home and shed a light in our workplace and in our city. Father, I pray that You would help us to clothe ourself with righteousness in our home and at work, that we would see You glorified, with people coming to know You, that we would see our children grow up in love and peace, that we would see our wives being encouraged, that husbands would be encouraged and strengthened, and that we would glorify You in all that we say and do. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.