# Living Under the Lordship of Christ

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[0:00] Our reading this evening is taken from Colossians chapter 3, and we're reading from verse 18 to chapter 4, verse 1.! I'm actually going to read verse 17 as well from chapter 3.

! So if you have a Bible, please open it there. Let's read together. Verse 17 says this, Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord.
Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.
Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Slaves, 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.
Whatever you do, work heartily. Ask for the Lord, and not for men. Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.
[1:27] You are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a master in heaven.

Amen. And may God bless to us this reading from his word this evening. Let's pray together. Let's pray. Father, as we open your word, our prayer is that we would hear you speak to us, and that we would have ears to hear.
Lord, may your spirit be at work, and may you receive all the glory, all the honor, and all the praise. In Jesus' name, amen. Where the rubber meets the road.
It's a phrase that's frequently used to refer to the moment of truth, when hitherto untested theories and plans come into contact with the real world.
And the expression, as you might imagine, originates from the realm of automotive mechanics, metaphorically comparing the critical point between a vehicle's rubber tires and the road surface to that contact point between theory and practice.
[2:56] And I think, in a way, this is what Paul is speaking about here in our next section of Colossians. Because in these verses before us tonight, he's applying the teaching that has been outlined in the previous section.

United to Christ, we become part of God's new creation, a new humanity. And this involves, as we've seen over the last couple of weeks, the putting off of the old self, our old Adamic nature, and the putting on of our new self.
We're to battle and struggle against sin, against evil and a covetous heart, against anger, malice, idolatry. And we're to put on Christ, His love, His kindness, His patience, His humility, and His forgiveness.
So where does the rubber tire of our new identity in Christ meet the road? Well, it meets the road in our relationships with other people.
And so Paul addresses in these verses before us this evening three key areas of human life. What does it mean to be a Christian and to live for Jesus in my marriage, if I'm married, in my family, in my place of work?
[4:27] In many respects, this is the acid test of any Christian profession. Here's where the rubber meets the road. Here are these key relationships where it will become clear and apparent and evident whether or not the gospel is really at work, Christ is really at work, in changing my heart and in changing my life.

Here are relationships where the lordship of Christ over my life must be seen to be something tangible and real.

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Now, I read from verse 17 those words, whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.
Paul is telling us that as those who have been united by faith to Jesus Christ, we are to do everything in His name. We are to live, the idea there is we are to live to please Him.
And I think that verse 17 really controls the verses that follow and that we're looking at tonight. Paul is spelling out for us what it means for us to do all in the name of Jesus.
[5:47] What will that look like in the various relationships of life to do everything in Christ's name? What will it look like for us to please not ourselves, but Jesus Christ in all these different areas of life?

In Paul's day, the Greco-Roman world often had its own household tables or household codes detailing how people were to live in these key relationships.
And what Paul does here is to take that cultural model, as it were, and Christianize it. He wants to show us the difference living for the Lord truly makes in these different contexts.
And I think primarily these verses are about submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. They're about living under His authority and rule.
And you'll notice in these verses, Paul talks about living lives that are fitting in the Lord. He talks about what pleases the Lord.
[6:59] He talks about working as for the Lord, serving the Lord, and as those who have a Lord or a Master in heaven. In other words, these verses are an exposition of what it means to live under the Lordship of Christ and to do everything in His name and for His glory.

Here's what it will mean to live not for our own name, but for Christ's name. So let's look at these three areas that Paul mentions here.
Now, we're going to move through fairly quickly as we have to. And so if there are any difficult questions or issues that you feel you want to talk about, Corey's sitting right at the front and he'll be happy to answer any of them.
Now, if you do have questions or things I don't touch on, feel free to come and to speak to me at the end. We begin here with married life in verses 18 and 19 of chapter 3.
Now, not everyone in the Colossian church would have been married, just as in our own fellowship, some would have been single or widowed or separated or even divorced.
[8:14] Nonetheless, whatever our circumstances, we cannot ignore the fact that marriage is a fundamentally important relationship. in any Christian community.

People need to know how they should relate to one another in their marriages. And Paul begins, you'll notice, by giving instruction to wives first, and then secondly to husbands.
Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives. Do not be harsh with them. Now, underpinning, I think what Paul says here is the recognition that men and women are different.
Men and women are not interchangeable, unisex beings. They think and act and function differently to one another. There was a book, I think published many years ago now, under the title, it conveys this idea, men are from Mars, women are from Venus.
Yeah. And of course, people today disparage, bemoan gender stereotypes. But actually, there's a reason that some things are viewed as being stereotypically male or female, because men and women are different.
[9:34] And the assumption here is, you'll notice, that marriage is between a man and a woman. This goes back to Genesis 1, verse 27, God created man in His own image.

In the image of God, He created him. Male and female, He created them. Biblically, marriage is between one man and one woman. It's not between two men, it's not between two women, or even some kind of menage a trois.
Marriage is designed and defined by God as being between one man and one woman. Those in some churches who support other arrangements have, in my view, departed from the Christian faith at this point.
And so, when Paul writes about the marriage relationship here, you'll notice he somewhat controversially, for our own context, begins by speaking about submission.
Submitation. And specifically, he speaks of wives submitting to their husbands. That word submit is a key word, I think, in Christian ethics.

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[10:44] In fact, in the New Testament, it's used of Jesus Himself. Sometimes it's translated as to be subject. The word, I think, is taken from some kind of military context.

It conveys this idea of being under in rank. It's a word associated with structure and shape and arrangement. And as I say, this word is used of Jesus.
1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 28, when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to Him who put all things in subjection under Him, that God may be all in all.
And in that passage, Paul is speaking about the coming of the kingdom. How all things will be brought under the authority of Christ. And how Jesus will submit Himself in His humanity to God the Father.
There is no sense of Jesus the Son being inferior to the Father. We've been looking at the Trinity in our midweek meetings. And if that point has been said once, it's been said a hundred times.
[11:50] He is equal to the Father. He's one with the Father. He is the one in whom all the fullness of God is pleased to dwell. And yet in His humanity, He submits Himself to the Father in order to accomplish and carry out the eternal purpose of God.

So this idea of submission does not carry with it an idea of inferiority. It's not about a different status before God. It's about a different role or function in God's creation designed for marriage.
Wives are not to domineer, manipulate, undermine, but submit themselves in love to their husbands. And living for the Lord, they're to respect and encourage their husband's headship in the home.
And in turn, husbands are called upon to love their wives, not to be harsh with them. It's not all one side or all the other. It's two together. And it's interesting, in the household codes of the ancient world, there was no instruction to husbands.
What we have here is one of the differences that the gospel makes. In Ephesians 5, Paul says that the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church.
[13:05] And so if the model of submission for the wife is Christ, then so too He is the model for the husband. Ephesians 5, 21, Paul says to all the believers, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

The husband has a duty of care for his wife. His leadership should entail care, not control. Responsibility, not rule.
The Christian husband is called upon to love his wife and not to become bitter or harsh towards her. The word there conveys the sense of being irritated or resentful.
And friends, often a harsh or bitter resentful spirit can result in an overflow of verbal, psychological, even physical abuse in a marriage relationship.
Friends, such behavior has to have no place within the Christian community. No place. And where such abuse is known to exist, the church must exercise pastoral proper discipline.
[14:16] So for husband and wife, there are these different roles and responsibilities in the Bible. But Paul is not encouraging here misogyny, tyrannical, oppression, or abuse.

He's not calling upon wives to be doormats or menial servants. He's calling for a mutuality of sacrificial submission and love, calling men and women in the covenant of marriage to be like Jesus Christ.
He's encouraging Christlikeness. Within marriage, men and women are to serve one another in love. Paul is challenging selfishness and encouraging servanthood.
Because following Jesus in marriage means you don't put yourself first. You seek the well-being of the other. Marriage is hard work.
It's not easy. We're both sinners. We need Christ. We need the help of His Holy Spirit. We need it. We need Christ's forgiveness.
[15:23] We need His grace. We need His strength. We need His love to make our relationships and marriages work. It's only as we're looking to Him and following Him and trusting Him and putting Him first and serving Him that we are enabled by God's grace to live like Him in the marriage relationship.

Married life. Secondly here, family life. Children, obey your parents in everything. This pleases the Lord. Fathers, don't provoke your children lest they become discouraged.
Paul begins instruction to the children and I think that in itself is something noteworthy. Children are viewed here as being very much part and parcel of the Christian community.

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They're addressed directly. They're expected to conduct themselves as those who belong to the Lord. Children here are assumed to be part of the covenant community.
It's one of the reasons that in our Presbyterian tradition we baptize the children of believers. We are saying that they belong. They're not being raised on the outside.
[16:35] They're being raised on the inside. Now, disobedience to parents is sometimes listed as a vice of paganism.

Paul does that in Romans 1.30 and also in 2 Timothy chapter 3.2. It's often a tangible sign of a community and society in which God has been rejected.
How true that is in our own culture. And so, in a community where God is loved and served and worshipped, the very opposite should be the case.
Within the church, children are to obey their parents in all things and everything for this is pleasing to God. That everything or all things doesn't mean anything that is wicked or evil or contrary to the Word of God.
Their obedience is to please the Lord. That could hardly be the case if it was a sinful behavior. The challenge for young people, I think, is to live in a way that honors their parents.
[17:40] This is what pleases God. And again, that is a pattern we see in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We're told in Luke chapter 2 verse 51 of how as a child Jesus related to His parents. We're told there He went down with them, came to Nazareth and was submissive to them.
Very often as children grow up, particularly in teenage years, they feel more acutely the challenge of peer pressure. They may come to distance themselves from their parents, sometimes even despise their parents.
But whoever we are, we should not be looking for approval and acceptance to our peer group, but to the Lord. We're to love Him and serve Him above all else.
That's not always cool or fashionable, but it's what pleases God. And in turn here, fathers are called upon not to provoke or discourage their children.
[18:54] There can be a tendency for fathers to become too heavy-handed, and that is not a good thing. An over-demanding father can make his children's lives a misery.

Such a man can be difficult, even impossible to please. Parental authority is not to be misused or abused. I have over the years witnessed all too many games of youth football where a child has been castigated from the sidelines by a zealous and over-demanding father.
It is never a pretty sight. Indeed, there's something very ugly about such a scene. That kind of pressure is not wise, it is not helpful, and yes, of course, sometimes our children need to be challenged and stirred up to do better, but we must be very careful not to provoke, discourage, or frustrate.
Unreasonable demands, false expectations, favoritism, overindulgence, the unkind use of sarcasm and ridicule can all in their own ways provoke and discourage our children.
Our children must not become little idols through which we simply serve ourselves and our own egos. The rule of Christ among His people is one that is encouraging and stimulating.
[20:25] It allows us to flourish and grow and mature, and so that pattern of Christ is to be our pattern in parenting. He is not a tyrant or spiritual bully, but a gracious, kind Master and Lord.

The gospel should make us sensitive to those around us and concerned for their well-being. We too have to live to please God and not ourselves.
Married life, family life, working life, in verses 22 of chapter 3 through to chapter 4, verse 1. The final part of the section is taken up, you'll notice, with instructions to both slaves and masters.
In fact, most of the verses are directed towards slaves, and that shouldn't be a surprise because we need to remember that the Roman world of the first century, approximately half the population were slaves.
Doctors, teachers, many that we would consider to be belonging to the professions were slaves. Slavery was part of the warp and woof of the ancient world, and within the church, many, if not most, of the people would have been slaves, and that is why we have this emphasis here.
[21:50] Paul does not issue a call to the slaves in the church to rise up and overthrow their masters. He's writing here with a pastoral concern for God's people, and sometimes people get themselves worked up because Paul isn't denouncing the evils of slavery in his correspondence with the churches.

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That's not why he was writing his letters. He was speaking to a specific people in their own God-given context. However, the very seeds of the destruction of the institution of slavery are to be found in Paul's teaching in the gospel.
And here in Colossians, it's as if he wants these Christians to show that the gospel works in the worst as well as in the best of circumstances.
After all, not every master was kind and generous. Many were harsh and merciless in the way they treated those under them. How were God's people to live and conduct themselves in what effectively was their working environment?
In the case of slaves in that society, they owed service to their masters. And Paul indicates here that where service is due, service has to be given. In our own society, thankfully, we don't have slavery, but we do have contexts where one person may owe service to another.
[23:21] And the most obvious of that being, you know, an employment contract. And it's interesting to see what Paul writes to those who were actually working as slaves, bond servants, obeying everything, those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye service as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

Now, yes, of course, these slaves had to serve their earthly masters, but beyond that, they were to understand that they were serving the Lord. They were not to serve, they were to serve not simply to please their master, but to please the master.
That was to be their ultimate motivation. ultimately, they were serving the Lord, so they were to work with all their heart and they were to give a hundred percent.
There's a story told of a young woman, a domestic servant, many years ago, wanted to join the Metropolitan Tabernacle where C.H. Spurgeon was the minister.
And Spurgeon quizzed her and questioned her about her faith, her knowledge of the Bible, and so forth. And when he pressed her for evidence that Christ had changed her, she blushed and she confessed, well, she said, I sweep under the carpets now.
[24:49] Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men. Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward, you are serving the Lord Christ.

Paul wanted these Christian slaves in Colossae to understand that their ultimate reward lay ahead in the resurrection life of God's kingdom. They would inherit that kingdom not as slaves, but as sons and daughters, those belonging in the very family of God.
For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. The Christian slave was to represent Jesus well. He or she was not to be engaged in theft or wrongdoing because they were accountable to God.
It seems, in a sense, that the slaves, it's interesting, the slaves were to be concerned for their masters. They were not simply to be living for themselves. They were to be thinking of those to whom they owed service.
the whole of their lives was to be lived out as a servant of the Lord Jesus. Isn't that a hugely challenging thing?
[26:07] And yet, this is the way we are to think about our own lives. Our lives are not our own. They've been bought with a price. We've been set free by the gospel to serve Christ.

And that service we are to offer is not confined to what we do on a Sunday in a church. It involves every single aspect of our lives, including our working lives.
So, whatever we may be and however we may be called to serve, you may be a doctor or a nurse, a teacher, a bus driver, electrician, minister, housewife, secondary cleaner, solicitor, accountant, student, and so forth, engineer.
We are to work as to the Lord. That has to shape the way we think about our working life because we're His servants.
His eye is upon us. He's our Master and Lord. And hence, in a difficult work situation and with perhaps a difficult boss, the Christian is called to look beyond them and to serve the Lord Himself.
[27:17] And what a testimony that can be in the workplace. You think people are not looking? Oh, yes, they are. And that's true whether we are servants or masters.

Masters, treat your bond servants justly, fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. Those in authority are called upon to exercise the authority they've been given wisely and well. They too are men and women under authority. authority. And that authority is not to be misused or abused for selfish ends. How we, if you're in a position of authority in the workplace, how we treat

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those who are working for us reflects how well we have understood the gospel.
over the years I've made a, made the painful discovery on more than one occasion that some who were to all appearances notable upstanding Christians in the church were at the very same time impossible bullies in their business or work environment.
and what damage is done to the cause of Christ by such behavior. And so if you're in a position of authority in the workplace do not forget that you also have a Master in heaven.
[28:47] It's interesting isn't it how some of these roles husband, father, master are actually used in the Bible of God. in particular that relationship between the Godhead and the Christian believer.

The Old Testament God is Israel's husband he pursues in love. In the New Testament Christ is the bridegroom the church's bride God is the father of his own people they are his children.
That relationship being to God and his people is sometimes characterized as that between master and servant. Because there's a sense in which that relationship with God you see must be right before these other relationships will be right.
God must be our husband father and master and we must be subject to him. That's what it means to have Jesus Christ as our Lord. As Christians Jesus calls us forward on the path of service.
That's where the call of the gospel invariably leads us to service and servanthood. This is where God is leading us in our marriages in our families in our church in our places of work and employment.
[29:58] He's calling you to be a servant and the servant of others. And yes of course it is the Lord Jesus who is the great servant who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

He came to pour out the abundance of his grace upon us. To pour out his forgiveness his love pour out his blood that makes even the foulest clean.
His love that is placarded before us tonight in bread and wine claims us as his servants. This is our God we sometimes sing the servant king he calls us now to follow him.
And yes of course none of us are perfect husbands or wives none of us are perfect children or parents none of us are perfect workers or bosses in so many ways we fail and fall short.
But friends the good news of the gospel the good news of this table is that no matter how badly we have failed we can come in faith to Jesus and see our sins washed clean.
[31:22] We can be changed and things can be different because Christ gives to his people a servant heart and where he is preeminent or supreme in our lives that is where gospel transformation takes place and it will be seen in our marriages.

our closest relationships in our families in our working environment it will be seen precisely where the rubber meets the road.
In his biography of the Welsh preacher Martin Lloyd-Jones the first 40 years Ian Murray narrates in some detail the impact of Dr. Jones ministry at Sandfields in Aberraven 100 years ago the 1920s and 30s and there is a section in that book in which a whole variety of testimonies are given to the power of the gospel in transforming the lives of men and women in that community and in one of those testimonies Ian Murray tells of how at school one afternoon a teacher was told by a boy in her class very excited tones we had dinner today miss we had gravy we had potatoes meat and cabbage and rice pudding they had rarely had such a meal at home before and the reason for this state of affairs was soon forthcoming the school teacher
Mrs. Rees was then told my father has been converted because the money that this man had formerly spent on drink when he got his pay packet on a Friday was now brought home to provide for his wife and children friends what is that it is the transforming power of the gospel what a difference Jesus Christ makes when he comes into a man or a woman's life what a change his roles and yes in one case it may be meat and cabbage and rice pudding and another a broom under the carpet but God's transforming work always leaves traces in its wake and if the gospel really works then it will work here in our marriages in our families in our places of work where the rubber meets the road friends the great key that unlocks all of this is to bring your life under the lordship of Jesus Christ nothing will be right until he is lord give your life to him submit to him bow the knee to him and see how he by his holy spirit will change your heart and change your life change your marriage change your family change your work and your worship whatever you do in word or deed do everything in the name of the lord
Jesus let's pray together lord grant us your grace and the help of your holy spirit to bring transformation and change to our hearts that we may long to please you that we may long to do

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everything in the name and for the sake of our lord Jesus lord whoever we are whatever our circumstances may be may you be pleased to be at work in us and through us and for your glory in Jesus name amen

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