

COLOSSIANS: CHRIST OVER ALL AND IN ALL (study 7)

Admonition & Exhortation

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. COL.3:17

Study 7a: DUE SUBMISSION 'IN THE LORD' (3:18-4:1)

Spurgeon is recorded to have said in his characteristically quaint way, that this chapter begins in heaven and ends in the kitchen. [Thomas 95]

3:18,19 Is there balance in this politically-incorrect admonition? (Matt.20:20-28; John 13:3-17; Eph.5:21-33)

[3:18] Codes of domestic behaviour were not unknown in pagan antiquity, setting forth the mutual duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves, and so on. ... If the Stoic disciple asked why he should behave in this particular way, his master would no doubt tell him that this was the way which accorded with the nature of things; when a Christian convert asks the same question, he is told that this is the behaviour which "is fitting in the Lord" ... [Bruce 287,288]

Paul is not suggesting here that the woman is naturally or spiritually inferior to the man, or the wife to the husband. But he does mention elsewhere that there is a divinely instituted hierarchy in the order of creation ... [O'Brien 222]

[3:18] The present loose ideas in regard to easy divorce are bearing fearful fruit which will increase unto more ungodliness as the end draws near, until there will be duplicated in Christendom the corruption and vileness of the days before the flood and the unspeakable immoralities of the cities of the plain. Of all this our blessed Lord has warned us most solemnly. For one to seek to dissolve the marriage relationship because of incompatibility of temperament is to fly in the face of the Word of the living God. [Ironsides 157]

[3:19] It has often been pointed out that there is no word expressive of the opposite of submission, like "order" or "command." Submission, not commanding, is emphasised. Love includes everything that a husband should be to a wife, because here, as elsewhere in the New Testament, love is not a mere feeling but a fact, not emotion but devotion, not attitude but action, not sentiment but sacrifice. [Thomas 104,105]

[3:19] In a true marriage, as in the loving obedience of a believing soul to Christ, the wife submits not because she has found a master, but because her heart has found its rest. ... a woman's love is, in general, nobler, purer, more unselfish than a man's, and therein, quite as much as in physical constitution, is laid the foundation of that Divine ideal of marriage, which places the wife's delight and dignity in sweet loving subjection. [Maclaren 272]

"Love is not a mere feeling but a fact, not emotion but devotion, not attitude but action, not sentiment but sacrifice"

3:20,21 Is parental submission an opening for abuse and tyranny? (Eph.6:1-4)

[3:20] The injunction to children, like that to slaves, is put rather more strongly than the one to wives. While the latter was expressed in the middle voice ([*hupotassomai*], "be subordinate"), suggesting voluntary submission, the admonitions to children and slaves are in the active imperative denoting absolute obedience. [O'Brien 224]

[3:21] So parents are to let the sunshine of their smile ripen their children's love to fruit of obedience, and remember that frost in spring scatters the blossoms on the grass. [Maclaren 274]

3:22-24 Note the frequency of the Lord's mention in this also politically-incorrect, hierarchical advice (Eccl.5:8)

St Paul approaches the Christian Home through the fullest possible "truth as it is in Jesus"; and then it becomes not Utopia, [*eutopia*], the place that is not, but Eutopia, [*eutopia*], the happy place. A power is then introduced adequate to cause the happiness; for "Christ in you, the hope of glory," ... is a power which can really make men and women habitually forget their rights and remember their duties, on both sides, and all round. And *then* there is happiness indeed! [Moule 245]

3:25-4:1 What shall a master remember, knowing that earth's hierarchy is a reflection of the heavenly? (Eph.6:5-9)

[3:25] The philosophers of Greece taught, and the laws of Rome assumed, that the slave was a chattel. But a chattel could have no rights. It would be absurd to talk of treating a chattel with justice. [Lightfoot 239]

[4:1] English Christendom has long repudiated the theory and the institution of domestic slavery ... this is the direct work of the Gospel, not of non-Christian civilization. The most advanced of the ancient civilizations ... not only never repudiated slavery but shewed no tendency to do so. The genius and culture of an Aristotle only lead him to philosophize upon the matter, and to discuss the inmost nature of slavery, in terms as ruthless as they are interesting. In order to abolish slavery ... it was needful that the Gospel should intervene, revealing to the world the fact that God had taken to Himself the human nature which was as much the slave's nature as the master's;



H.C.G. Moule
Strive for eutopia, not utopia

The 'little' we do for Him is as eternal as the large

How astonished Tychicus would have been if anybody had told him on that day when he got away from Rome, with 2 precious letters ... that these bits of parchment would outlast all the ostentatious pomp of the city, and that his name, because written in them, would be known to the end of time all over the world! The eternal things are the things done for Christ. ... That Colossian Church ... Where is it now? Gone. Where are its sister Churches of Asia? Gone. Paul's work and Tychicus' seem to have vanished from the earth and Mohammedanism to have taken its place ... here are we to-day ... in lands that were mere slaughterhouses of savagery then learning our best lessons from Paul's words, and owing something ... to Tychicus' humble care. Paul meant to teach a handful of obscure believers -- he has edified the world. Tychicus thought to carry the precious letter safely over the sea -- he was helping to send it across the centuries ... [Maclaren 282,283]

that for slave as well as master Christ had died; that “all souls are His”; that in the Lord Jesus the poorest and weakest becomes the very child and heir of God. Yes, it was impossible that slavery should *ultimately* survive alongside the religion of Christ Jesus; though it was no part of the work of that religion to proclaim a social revolution, which must have meant a universal Servile War, in order to realize its noble ideal. [Moule 239,240]

Study 7b: EXHORTATIONS, ENCOURAGEMENT (4:2-18)

4:2-4 What do we plainly see are Paul’s priorities in prayer?

[4:2] What is prayer? Not the utterance of words -- they are but the vehicle; but the attitude of the spirit. Communion, aspiration, and submission, these three are the elements of prayer ... There may be unbroken communion, a constant consciousness of God’s presence, and of our contact with Him, thrilling through our souls and freshening them, like some breath of spring reaching the toilers in choky factories and busy streets; or even if the communion do not run like an absolutely unbroken line of light through our lives, the points may be so near together as all but to touch. In such communion words are needless. When spirits draw closest together there is no need for speech. [Maclaren 277]

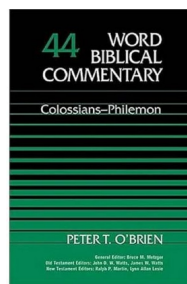
4:5,6 Although we receive NO exhortation to evangelize -- as usual in Paul’s epistles -- what awesome responsibility do ALL Christians have? (Eccl.5:1-7; 1 Pet.3:15)

[4:5] It is at least suggestive, and it may be significant, that there is an almost entire absence of appeal in St. Paul’s Epistles to evangelise, only one such exhortation being found (2 Tim. 4:5). But there is a constant emphasis on the Christian life of holiness and the necessity of realising our full privileges in Christ. There may be some connection between the absence of the appeal and the presence of the emphasis, for if the inner life is right, soul-winning and evangelism will be the natural and necessary outcome. [Thomas 118]

F.W. Grant has well said, “Our Lord has no stereotyped method of dealing with souls.” ... He did not talk to the woman at the well in the same way as He addressed Nicodemus ... He probed the depths of each heart and ministered according to the need. [Paul]... was made all things to all men if by any means he might save some. In the Jewish synagogue he reasoned out the Scriptures like the most able rabbi or doctor of the law. When he stood on Mars Hill among the Athenian philosophers he was a master of rhetoric and showed full acquaintance with Greek thought and literature Addressing the idolaters of Lycaonia he met them on their own ground, and appealed from nature to nature’s God, seeking to turn them from their vanities and draw their hearts to the Creator ... How different in all this was both the Master and servant to many who to-day seem to pride themselves on their outspokenness and indifference to the views and opinions of others. Is it any wonder that men turn from them in disgust and refuse to listen to what seems to them but the dogmatic utterances of self-centred egotists. [Ironside 174,175]

[4:6] This could be taken to mean “witty” since salt had this significance in pagan usage ... or “winsome,” so that the Colossians’ speaking was to exercise a wholesome influence in conversation which might otherwise become debated or crude. [O’Brien 243]

[4:6] If they practise grace of speech, it will not desert them when they find themselves suddenly confronted by the necessity of defending their Christian belief. Nor will their speech be acceptable if it is insipid. Those who are the salt of the earth may reasonably be expected to have some savour about their language. [Bruce 299]



[4:6] He assumes that every convert would covet to be thus an “apologist”; an expounder and vindicator of the truth, of the Lord, whom he had found. His life would mark him out for enquiry, so different would he be from his old self. [Moule 258]

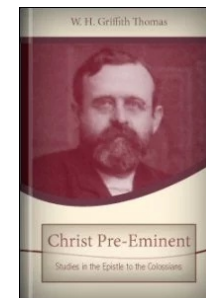
4:7-11 Though Paul is an apostle, his authority does not prevent him from viewing his fellow-workers as equals in Christ -- *beloved brothers, fellow servants, fellow prisoners, fellow workers* (Matt.23:1-12)

[4:10] It is particularly interesting to notice this allusion to Mark, because it implies that the estrangement was at an end. Opinions differ as to which was right, Barnabas in his partiality, or Paul in his severity (Acts 15:37-39). Perhaps we may say that both were right, for it may well have been that St. Paul’s strictness made Mark realise what was necessary, while the love of Barnabas gave him another opportunity ... [Thomas 114]

[4:11] When Paul speaks of the kingdom of God he usually thinks of its future manifestation, retaining such an expression as “the kingdom of Christ” for its present aspect. But such a passage as Rom. 14:17 (“the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking ...”) shows that “the kingdom of God” may also have a present reference in Paul’s writings, and so it may be here. We recall that in Acts 28:30 f. Paul is said to have spent these two years in Rome “proclaiming the kingdom of God and telling the story of the Lord Jesus Christ”; in this work he had these three Jewish Christians to assist him [Bruce 306,307]

4:12-18 Multiple lessons in these last verses - both encouraging and ominous (cf. 2 Tim. 4)

The way in which the Apostle emphasises the Headship of Christ shows what this means (2:10,19), and the thought of believers being “in Christ” or “in the Lord” that runs from beginning to end is noteworthy ... The saints and faithful brethren are “in Christ” (1:2); our faith is in Christ Jesus (1:4); redemption is ours in Christ (1:14); all things hold together in Him (1:17); in Him all fulness dwells (1:19); every man is to be presented mature in Christ (1:28); all Christians are made full in Him (2:10); wives, husbands, children, servants, and masters are all in one way or another appealed to because of their relationship to Christ, because they are “in the Lord” (3:18-4:1); and St. Paul’s friends have the same blessed spiritual position (4:7,12,17) ... the believer is united with Christ in His death (2:20) and resurrection (3:1), and is now living above with a life hid with Christ in God (3:1-3). [Thomas 124]



‘Judgment begins at the house of God’

While salvation in the Bible is according to grace, judgment is always according to works, whether good or bad ... It may seem difficult to understand how one who by grace is blessed with God’s salvation in Christ may yet before the divine tribunal “receive again the wrong that he has done.” But it is in accordance with the teaching of Scripture throughout that judgment should “begin at the house of God”, and even if the tribunal be a domestic one, for members of the family of God, it is none the less a solemn reality. [Bruce 295]

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