



THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Lesson Number 18



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Standard Version (2001), KJV=King James Version (1611), NKJV=New King James Version (1982), NAB=New American Bible (1995), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND MOTIVATION

“ 3:18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. 20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. 21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. 22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: 23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons. 4:1 Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”
KJV (Col 3:18-4:1)

INTRODUCTION

Doing everything “in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him” is integral to spiritual life. Salvation does not make provision for any other kind of living. This understanding is essential if we are to live lives that are acceptable to God. **In redemption we are liberated from**

enslavement to self and sin. The objective of life is abruptly altered when we are justified, delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God’s “dear Son.” This is frequently stated with unusual pungency.

✦ “And that He died for all, that they

which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but **unto Him which died for them, and rose again.**” (2 Cor 5:15)

✦ “That He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might **serve Him**

OUTLINE

- ▶ WIVES (3:18)
- ▶ HUSBANDS (3:19)
- ▶ CHILDREN (3:20)
- ▶ FATHERS (3:21)
- ▶ SERVANTS (3:22a)
- ▶ MENPLEASERS VERSUS SINGLENES OF HEART (3:22b)
- ▶ DO IT HEARTILY (3:23)
- ▶ KNOWING YOU WILL RECEIVE THE REWARD (3:24)
- ▶ THE FUTURE OF WRONG DOING (3:25)
- ▶ MASTERS (3:26)

without fear” (Luke 1:74)

- ✦ *“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but **yield yourselves unto God**, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness **unto God.**” (Rom 6:13)*
- ✦ *“Beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, **acceptable unto God**, which is your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1).*
- ✦ *“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live **unto the Lord**; and whether we die, we die **unto the Lord**: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.” (Rom 14:7-8)*

- ✦ *“For ye are bought with a price: therefore **glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.**” (1 Cor 6:20)*
- ✦ *“For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might **live unto God.**” (Gal 2:19)*
- ✦ *“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me **to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**” (Phil 1:20-21)*
- ✦ *“Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we **should live together with Him.**” (1 Thess 5:10)*
- ✦ *“Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify **unto Himself** a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus 2:14)*
- ✦ *“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work **to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.**” (Heb 13:21)*

The Spirit will now deal with interpersonal relationships –

associations that are to be lived out as to the Lord. These are areas in which our faith in, and love for Christ dictates what we do. Furthermore, each of the areas that are mentioned are intensely personal. **These are domains of personal life for which the ones addressed are responsible.** These are not areas in which one becomes a “lord” over the other. All of these relations are under the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, and are to be lived out in personal devotion to Him.

Putting On the New Man

These are all involved in putting on “the new man.” Success in these areas depend upon seeking the things that are above, and placing our affection upon them 3:1-2). These are responsibilities in which the peace of God can rule in our hearts. They are included in our words and deeds that are to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father through Him. **No part of our life can be lived out independently of faith, or apart from our identity with God through Christ Jesus the Lord.** Life in its totality has been impacted by salvation.

All of the resources obtained in redemption are available for our use in the following areas of responsibility. **None of the exhortations can be fulfilled in the energy of the flesh.** All of them are to be done as unto the Lord, with a primary and dominating love for Him. Let it be clear that no other kind of life is acceptable to God. This is, in fact, becoming a “*living sacrifice*” (Rom 12:1).

WIVES

“^{3:18} Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.”

Because of improper approaches to the subject before us, it is possible for those to whom the words are addressed to assume a defensive posture. First, let it be clear that **the Lord Jesus did not author a salvation that is fundamentally restrictive.** The aim of redemption is to make us free, not to bind

heavy burdens upon us. Thus it is written, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal 5:1).

SUBMIT YOURSELVES

“Wives, submit yourselves . . . ” Other versions read, “be subject to,”^{NASB} “submit to,”^{NIV} “be in subjection to,”^{ASV} “be under the authority of,”^{BBE} and “be subordinate to.”^{NAB}

The words “submit yourselves” come from a single Greek word (ὑποτάσσεσθε), which means “to arrange under, to subordinate, to subject one’s self, to submit to one’s control, to yield to one’s admonition of advice.”^{THAYER}

The words “submit yourselves,” indicate this is something **the wives do of their own accord.** No other person is charged with the responsibility of making them doing this. It is not, for example, the husband’s responsibility to make their

wives submissive, and such an approach is not found in Scripture.

Not the Destruction of Individuality

The word “submit” does not destroy individuality. Neither, indeed, does it give license to the flesh. The example of our Lord is sufficient to direct our understanding in this matter.

The Example of Jesus

✚ **IN HIS YOUTH.** “*And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart*” (Luke 2:51).

✚ **IN HIS MINISTRY.** “. . . *I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things*” (John 8:28). “*For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak*” (John 12:49). “. . . *the words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works*” (John 14:10).

✚ **IN HIS PERSON.** “*But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the Head of Christ is God*” (1 Cor 11:3). “*And ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s*” (1 Cor 3:23).

✚ **IN HIS DEATH.** “*Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father*” (John 10:18). “*Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done*” (Luke 22:42).

✚ **IN THE AGES TO COME.** “*For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject*

unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:27-28).

While Jesus was in subjection to the Father, doing only His will, and speaking only what He was given to speak, **He was by no means enslaved against his will.** He was a prodigious worker and speaker, continually active. Had He not told the people He was subject to the Father, they never would have imagined this to be the case. This was not something that was “according to

Submission, then, is not the removal of freedom, or banishment to inferiority – even though it is often so interpreted.

Submission involves living for someone else – a principle that pervades the whole of the Kingdom of God. As it is written, “*Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth*” (1 Cor 10:24). And again, “*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*” (Phil 2:4). It is said of the nature of spiritual life, “*love*

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the appearance” (John 5:24).

Submission was a humbling experience for Jesus because of what He was prior to becoming flesh. Therefore it is written, “*And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Phil 2:8). In this regard, no other person, whether man or woman, is so humbled by being in subjection.

Not Stepping Down

The words, “*Wives, submit yourselves,*” are not a call to step down, but to live in concert with the kingdom of God. **Everyone is subject to someone, with the only exception being God the Father** (1 Cor 15:27). Children are subject to their parents (Col 3:20), slaves to their masters (1 Pet 2:18), men to Christ, and Christ to God (1 Cor 11:3). Even the Holy Spirit does not “*speak on His own,*” but speaks “*only what He hears*” (John 16:13). We are to be “*subject to principalities and powers, and obey magistrates*” (Tit 3:1). In fact, within the body of Christ, all of the members are “*subject one to another,*” and are to be “*clothed with humility*” (1 Pet 5:5). That is the manner of the kingdom.

seeketh not her own” (1 Cor 13:5).

Paul confessed this was the manner in which he lived: “*Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved*” (1 Cor 10:33). What person would view this mighty Apostle as being restricted, and unable to express himself, or engage in most extensive activity? A person imagining such a thing is nothing more than a fool!

The subjection of the wife is to be something she renders – not something into which she is forced. **The husband is not charged with the responsibility of subjecting his wife.** Nor, indeed, is this word in any way addressed to the husband. The Spirit does not deliver the word to the husband in order that he might give it to the wife. The wife is a member of the body of Christ, and this is a word from the Head of that body. **While this word is generally applicable to all marriages, the focus here is the body of Christ.**

The notion of submitting, therefore, is not something intended only for wives. This is the manner of the kingdom. Now the Spirit will focus on

WHO the wife is subject to. We will find that the arrangement is very gracious.

YOUR OWN HUSBANDS

“... unto your own husbands...”

The words “your own” come from

and he did eat” (Gen 3:6). The desire of our text would be a natural one – an affection for her husband. Some have erroneously taught that this verse means the wife would have desires against her husband, or would compete against him and resist him. Such doctrines have not

the Head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the Head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3). This does not suggest that every man is the head of every woman. The reference is to marriage – husband and wife – not society in general. The headship of the husband is to be in perfect compatibility with God being the Head of Christ, and Christ being the Head of man. There is no room for the introduction of a different manner of headship within marriage.

Ephesians

A similar passage is found in the Epistle to the Ephesians. “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing” (Eph 5:23-24).

If the wife wonders concerning her subjection to her own husband, let her ponder the relationship of the church to Jesus Christ. Is that a form of heartless enslavement that chaffs against the will and promotes misery? Indeed not. The church is free and in subjection at the same time, and so is the wife!

FIT IN THE LORD

“... as it is fit in the Lord.” Other versions read, “as it is fitting in the Lord,”^{NKJV} “as it is right in the Lord,”^{BBE} “as it behoveth in the Lord,”^{DOUAY} “as it is proper in the Lord,”^{NAB} “as you should in the Lord,”^{NJB} and “as it is fitting for those who belong to the Lord.”^{NLT}

The book of Ephesians also speaks in this manner: “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Eph 5:22).

There are two senses in which this text can be taken.

In Keeping with Divine Intention

The first is that the subjection of the wife to her own husband is in strict harmony with the real nature of things.

✚ **Man was made first.** “For Adam was first formed, then Eve” (1 Tim 2:13).

✚ **The woman was taken from the man.** “And the rib, which the LORD

God “ruleth by His power” (Psa 66:7), yet is gracious to those who love Him – and even to the wicked as well (Matt 5:45). The word “rule” must not be associated with dictatorial manners, inconsideration, and maltreatment.

a word meaning “pertaining to one’s self, one’s own, belong to one’s self.”^{THAYER} This language assumes a single husband for the wife, belonging uniquely to her. This destroys the thought of bigamy being acceptable before God. Although there were men in Scriptural history who had several wives simultaneously, this was never intended by God. The practice was the result of lesser light, and in no way justified the practice. Jesus put it this way: “But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife” (Mark 10:6-7).

The Genesis Account

The subjection of the wife to the husband was originally announced by God. It was a consequence of Eve’s sin. “Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen 3:16). Other versions read, “your desire shall be for your husband,”^{NASB} “your yearning will be for your husband.”^{NJB}

The Desire

This desire, or yearning, is to be compared with Eve’s original quest for the forbidden fruit, which, when she perceived as “desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her;

come from God, and they are offensive to those who have a knowledge of the truth.

The wife, therefore, would **NOT** be coerced to obey her husband, but would **have an inclination toward him**. This is the normal situation. Where it does not exist, some abnormality is present. That abnormality may have been brought on legitimately – like God being moved to “abhor his own inheritance” (Psa 106:40), or Jesus being moved to vomit out His own church (Rev 3:16).

Rule

Nowhere are husbands admonished to rule over their wives, bringing them into subjection. This is a word to wives, not to husbands! The word “rule” speaks more of responsibility and gracious government than of abusive authority. For example, the peace of God rules our hearts (Col 3:15). Elders that “rule well” are to be “counted worthy of double honor” (1 Tim 5:17; Heb 13:7,17, 24). Just as there are evil and good rulers in both religion and politics, so there are on the domestic scene as well.

God “ruleth by His power” (Psa 66:7), yet is gracious to those who love Him – and even to the wicked as well (Matt 5:45). The word “rule” must not be associated with dictatorial manners, inconsideration, and maltreatment.

The Head of the Woman

“But I would have you know, that

God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man” (Gen 2:22).

- ✚ **The woman was made to be an appropriate helper for the man.** *“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen 2:18), “a helper suitable for him.”^{NIV}*
- ✚ **The woman was made for the man.** *“Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man” (1 Cor 11:8-9).*
- ✚ **The woman was in the transgression.** *“And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Tim 2:14).*
- ✚ **Their name was called “Adam.”** *“Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created” (Gen 5:2).*

Therefore, the wife who subjects herself to her own husband is doing so in harmony with Divine arrangements and revelation.

In Harmony with the Kingdom

There is also a matter of spiritual propriety. Sometimes it is not proper to be in subjection to the husband. **First, the husband has absolutely no authority over the wife in the matter of her relation to Christ.** He has no rule over her in that area, for in Christ “male” and “female” do not even exist (Gal 3:28).

There are several examples in Scripture of times when it is not appropriate to submit to ordinary authority.

- ✚ **Sarah.** When Sarah demanded that Hagar and Ishmael be expelled from their home, Abraham remonstrated because *“the thing was very grievous in his sight.”* The Lord spoke to him about the matter. *“Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called”* (Gen

21:12). A point is made of this by Paul, showing that it fulfilled an essential type (Gal 4:30).

- ✚ **Abigail.** This was a woman noted for *“good understanding”* and a *“beautiful countenance.”* However, her husband, Nabal, was *“churlish* (impudent and harsh) *and evil in his doing.”* When David gently asked Nabal to give provisions to his men, Nabal refused, and spoke against David. As a result of his insolence, David prepared four hundred men to wreak vengeance upon Nabal.

There are times when the duly constituted authorities are not to be obeyed. The appropriateness of these times is not to be determined in the flesh.

Without consulting with her husband, and in sharp contradiction of his decision, Abigail prepared a hundred loaves, two bottles of wine, five dressed sheep, about a bushel of parched born, a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred fig cakes. She then went to David and interceded, asking that he not shed blood. David recognized she had been sent to him by God, and did not retaliate. Later Abigail told Nabal what she did and *“his heart died within him, and he became as a stone.”* The Lord Himself then *“smote Nabal, and he died”* (1 Sam 25:18-39).

- ✚ **Moses’ wife, Zipporah.** Following his call at the burning bush, *“Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand”* (Ex 4:20). As he traveled, Moses and his family came to a certain lodging place. The Scriptures tell us *“that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him”* (Ex 4:24). We learn from the text that Moses had not circumcised his son. Without consulting with Moses, *“Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody*

husband art thou to me. So He let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision” (Exo 4:25-26).

- ✚ **Sapphira.** Early in the history of church a couple surfaced who lied about what they had contributed to the common treasury of the church. Peter presided over the situation. He first asked Ananias, Sapphira’s husband, what they had done. When Ananias lied, he was killed by the Lord. Later Peter also confronted Sapphira about the situation.

Although she had been given an opportunity to do what was right, she also lied, and was killed by the Lord (Acts 5:1-10). Although some teach that when a wife obeys her husband even when he is wrong, God will uphold her for her obedience, God killed Sapphira for agreeing with her husband.

There are times when the duly constituted authorities are not to be obeyed. The appropriateness of these times is not to be determined in the flesh. Rather, **it is when authorities seek to exercise their power in the spiritual domain that they are not to be heeded.** In such a case, obedience or submission would **not** be *“fitting in the Lord,”* for a demand is being made for God to be secondary. Some examples of this are as follows.

- ✚ The Hebrew midwives refused to obey the command of Pharaoh to kill Jewish male babies (Ex 1:15-21).
- ✚ Moses’ parents refused to obey the commandment of the king, sparing the infant Moses (Heb 11:23).
- ✚ Daniel refused to obey the king’s edict not to pray to anyone but the king himself (Dan 6:7-10).

✚ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to obey the king's mandate to bow to an image, even though he was their head upon earth (Dan 3:6-26).

✚ The wise men refused to obey Herod's command to return to him (Matt 2:8-12).

✚ Peter and the other Apostles refused to quit preaching as the High Priest commanded (Acts 4:20; 5:28-29).

Like all other members of the body of Christ, wives are to live their lives unto the Lord, conducting themselves as those who have been

bought with a price. They have a responsibility to their husbands that can be met by no one but themselves – and they are the ones who are to fulfill it. However, that responsibility at no time becomes greater than their responsibility to God. As with all other saints, their primary allegiance is to their Savior.

HUSBANDS

“¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”

DIVINE IMAGERY

Before beginning the exposition of this verse, I want to place it within the context of Divine intent. When God created man (or “*humankind*”), ^{NRSV} He did so in the Divine image: “*after Our likeness*” (Gen 1:26-27). **That likeness was not found in Adam alone, but in**

were accented that were not accentuated in Adam. The same was true of Adam.

Not Inferior Qualities

There are no Divine qualities that are inferior. Too often women are represented as having lower-ranking characteristics. How many times I have heard it said, women are basically emotional, while men are more intellectual, or some kindred thought.

recognition of the Divine imagery. The previous verse called upon the wife to see her husband from that vantage point. Now, the husband is required to view his wife in the same way. This word is not addressed to the wives, but to husbands. They are responsible for their own conduct, not the conduct of their wives.

LOVE YOUR WIVES

“Husbands, love your wives . . . ” Other versions read, “*have love for your wives,*” ^{BBE} and “*And you husbands must love your wives.*” ^{NLT}

This is a very appropriate word, for as soon as some husbands overhear what the Lord says to wives, they suppose that it allows for inconsiderate attitudes and behavior on their part. But it emphatically does not. The husbands are immediately admonished to “*love*” their wives. If a pattern of that love is sought, it is provided by the Spirit in Ephesians 5:25: “*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it*” (Eph 5:25).

The word “*love*” is an unusually strong one, with great depth and scope. From the standpoint of language it means, “to be fond of, to love dearly, to be well pleased with, be loyal to, regard highly, strive for, and long for,” ^{FRIBERG} “to show or prove one's love; longing for, desire, place first in one's affection,” ^{UBS} “to have love for someone, based on sincere appreciation and high regard, to regard with affection,” ^{LOUW-NIDA} “to treat with affection, to be well pleased with,” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} and “to love, to be full of good-will and to exhibit the same; to have a preference for, wish well to, regard the welfare of.” ^{THAYER}

As you can see, “*love*” touches the intellect, the emotion, and the will. It involves evaluation, pondering, insight,

There are no Divine qualities that are inferior. Too often women are represented as having lower-ranking characteristics. How many times I have heard it said, women are basically emotional, while men are more intellectual, or some kindred thought.

Adam and Eve – together they comprised the image of God. In rehearsing the creation the second time, the Spirit states it this way: “*This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him; male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created*” (Gen 5:1-2). There was a singularity in the creation – “*him.*” But there was also a duality – “*them.*” Because they were joined together as “*one flesh,*” the Lord “*called their name Adam.*” Two individuals, yet together they comprised a single image – the likeness of God. That is, mirrors of Divine qualities were found in both Adam and Eve. Eve was not a mere clone of Adam. Rather, in her certain qualities

This is a purely fleshly assessment. As ordinarily used, the word “*emotion*” belongs more to the jargon of psychiatry than to the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit. It is generally disassociated from reason and connected with mere feelings. **Aspects of the Divine image that seem to have been accented in the woman are tenderness, kindness, thoughtfulness, care, and the ability to be touched with the feelings of others.** These are not limited to the woman, but are found in a greater measure in them. They are not a sign of moral or intellectual weakness, and are not to be viewed as though that was the case.

Recognize the Image

The text before us is urging a

and purpose. It includes affection, tenderheartedness, and a wide range of emotions. It also embraces the determination to do good to, to bless, and to benefit. All of this is stated even more concisely in the Spirit's remarkable description of love, or charity. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth" (1 Cor 13:4-8a).

Adam first expressed this love in his response to God's gift of Eve: "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen 2:23-24). **She was part of himself, and he would treat her in a manner appropriate to that perspective.** Looking into the future, the Spirit adds that the wife would take precedence over the man's father and mother, whom he would leave in preference for her. He would "cleave," or cling, or be joined, to his wife. Following the death of his mother Sarah, Isaac was married to Rebekah. It is said of that occasion, "And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (Gen 24:67).

Notice, our text does **NOT** say, "husbands, rule your wives!" It does not say "Husbands, subordinate your wives!" or "Husbands, tell your wives what they are to do!" Whatever may be said of such an approach, that is not what the Spirit says here, or anywhere else.

Although Solomon did not do so well in this area himself, he did have a word of wisdom to husbands. "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which He hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labor which thou takest under the sun" (Eccl 9:9).

Just as the wife is not to allow her love for her husband to compete with her love for God, so the husband is not to allow his love for the wife to come between him and Jesus. That is why Jesus said, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). This by no means contradicts what our text says. It does enforce the truth that everything is to be as unto the Lord (Col 3:17).

It is quite possible that the love of a husband can be spurned by the wife, like the love of God was spurned by Israel (Jer 31:32), and the love of Jesus rejected by the professed church (Rev 3:14-16). However, it is the business of the husband to see to it that he is not deficient in that love, just as God and Jesus are not deficient in Their's.

The love of the husband for the wife is to be of the same order as Christ's love for the church. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He

the betterment of the wife, and holds her in the highest regard. When speaking of the "virtuous woman," Solomon did not paint the picture of a mindless vassal. He said she was a "crown to her husband" (Prov 12:4). She does good to her husband, selects material and works willingly with her hands. She brings her food from afar, extending herself to spread a good table. She rises before daybreak, giving food to her household. She is a good businesswoman, considering a field and buying it. She plants a vineyard, and cares for it. She senses her business is good, and even makes profit. She helps the poor and the needy. She speaks wisdom, and the law of kindness is in her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household, and is not idle.

However, Solomon preceded those glowing words with a comment about her husband. It shows us what love can do. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil" (Prov 31:11-30). Ah, that is the expression of love. Her husband is her head, but does not lord it over her. Instead, he trusts her judgment because she is a "virtuous woman." There is no doubt but that much of her

Looking into the future, the Spirit adds that the wife would take precedence over the man's father and mother, whom he would leave in preference for her. He would "cleave," or cling, or be joined, to his wife.

might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh" (Eph 5:25-31).

This is a selfless love that seeks

industriousness was motivated by his tender and thoughtful love. Husbands, go thou and do likewise.

BE NOT BITTER AGAINST THEM

"... and be not bitter against them." Other versions read, "do not be embittered against them,"^{NASB} "do not be harsh with them,"^{NIV} "never treat them harshly,"^{NRSV} and "do not be sharp with them."^{NJB}

The phrase "bitter against" involves being resentful, harsh, and sharp. Rather than loving the wife, being bitter against them is being irritated and angry

with them. It includes the idea of being unpleasant in word, conduct, or thought – being unmindful of the wife in deference for one’s own will.

Here is a word that is certainly in order. It assumes there will be irritations in life – opportunities in which the old man can awaken, as it were, and spew his venom into the home. The husband is not to be moody, unpleasing, and ill-natured, treating his wife as though she was a servant instead of “one flesh” with him.

The children of God are

their wives, or to move them to be harsh and resentful toward them. Such conduct is wrong toward anyone, much more against the one to whom we have been joined as “one flesh.”

Peter’s Admonition

Peter provides a word to husbands that is appropriate at this point. “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Pet 3:7). Another version reads, “You

So far as husbands are concerned, their wives should be the first beneficiary of this sanctified conduct. Bitterness, harshness, and inconsideration is not to be allowed in any part of our lives.

admonished, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice” (Eph 4:31). **So far as husbands are concerned, their wives should be the first beneficiary of this sanctified conduct.** Bitterness, harshness, and inconsideration is not to be allowed in any part of our lives. It certainly is not to be permitted to erupt in our homes, or against those who are our closest companions in the body, and with whom we are “one flesh.”

Husbands are to have an affection and care for the wife that is seen in Christ’s profound consideration of the church. It is said of our Lord, “He loved the church, can gave Himself for it” (Eph 5:25), forfeiting His own will for her eternal betterment. Our Savior is not condescending in His view of the church, as though it is to be pitied because of its inferiority. His profound sacrifice and provision is driven by His love for the church, which is His bride.

The church is to provide an environment that promotes this type of consideration and mindfulness. The assembly of the saints should never encourage husbands to be inconsiderate of

husbands likewise, live with your wives **in an understanding way**, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered”^{NASB} (1 Pet 3:7).

According to Knowledge

Here is a manner in which husbands are to live with their wives. It refers to more than the way in which they speak to their spouses. This is not mere intellectual knowledge, as though the husband knew a lot of facts about women in general, and his wife in particular. It rather refers to a thoughtful and considerate manner.

Giving Honor

Wives are to be treated “with respect,”^{NIV} “bestowing honor”^{NRSV} upon them. That certainly destroys any notion of the wife being inferior, much like a slave. This honor, or respect, is not to be given hesitatingly, but freely, and without restraint. On the one hand, it is a recognition of the Divine imagery in her. On the other hand, it is the acknowledgment that she is joined to the husband as “one flesh.”

Weaker Vessel

“Weaker” does not suggest inferiority. In the fleshly body, the heart is “weaker” than the fist or the skull – but it is certainly not inferior to them. When it comes to durability, a precious vase is “weaker” than a piece of iron – but it is surely not inferior to that iron.

The wife is not “weaker” intellectually, and much more, she is not “weaker” spiritually. She is not necessarily inferior in strength and durability. However, she is the more easily offended by harshness and inconsideration – like God was offended by the wayward conduct of Israel. She is able to be touched more readily by need – like Jesus was touched with the sight of the multitudes, while the disciples sought to bring down fire upon them.

It should be obvious that God nowhere enjoins men to give honor to what is inferior. Notwithstanding, throughout history men have tended to denigrate and abuse women. This is particularly true in countries where the Gospel has not been received. There have been few instances where women banded together in armies to retaliate against this abuse. That is evidence of what our text calls “weakness” – the kind of thing that can be honored, for retaliation is strictly forbidden by the Lord (Rom 12:17; 1 Thess 5:15; 1 Pet 3:9). What, therefore, men might view as a deplorable weakness, is actually a sign of profound strength.

What person among us would desire a mother who was harsh, lacking tenderness, and thoughtfulness, or who was slow to see the need for care?

Heirs Together

The consideration of the wife is placed within the context of redemption: “as being heirs together of the grace of life,” or because “she is your equal partner in God’s gift of new life.”^{NLT} This is not a reference to earthly life, as the next clause will confirm. In Christ Jesus, husband and wife are “heirs together according to the hope of eternal life” (Tit 3:7). The wife is to be viewed as a sister in Christ, a member of Christ’s body, and one who will reign with Christ – even as one who will judge the world and angels.

Prayers Be Not Hindered

Should the husband choose to

treat his wife inconsiderately, not giving her honor, it will impact upon his prayers. God Himself will react to such disobedience! The word “hindered” means “frustrated, cut down, hewn down, impeded, thwarted, delayed, and detained.” ROBERTSON “Hindered”

prayers are not simply prayers that are slowed down – not quite as effective as they could have been. Rather, it means that maltreatment of the wife is conduct that builds a wall between man and God. I hardly see how the importance of our

text could be affirmed with any more clarity. Let the husbands take heed to this word as those who themselves are servants of the Lord Jesus. Let them have the mind of Christ in their home. God will be with them in this activity.

CHILDREN

“²⁰ **Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.**”

In the home, everyone has responsibility **toward the Lord**. It is not that one person is the head, and all others are only responsible to that head. In Christ, we live unto the Lord, being primarily mindful of Him.

CHILDREN

“*Children . . .*” This refers to children with the powers of reason – who are attaining to some measure of understanding. There is also a word in Scripture for younger children, called infants and babes. The Greek word used is βρέφος (bre-phos), which means “baby, or infant.” It is used of an unborn child in the womb (Luke 1:44), a newborn child (Luke 2:12), a child of around two years of age (Luke 2:16), and those carried by their parents (Luke 18:15). This is **not** the word used here.

In this text, “*children*” refers to those who can receive a word, understanding and fulfilling it. In terms of years, this age may vary. Let every child with understanding give heed to what is said in this verse. **While it applies to all children of understanding, it particularly applies to those who are in Christ Jesus**, for that is specifically those to whom this epistle is addressed (Col 1:2).

OBEY YOUR PARENTS

“*. . . obey your parents . . .*” Other versions read, “*be obedient to your parents,*” NASB “*do the orders of your fathers and mothers,*” BBE and “*must always obey your parents.*” NLT

Those with children have no need for a word concerning the appropriateness

of this exhortation. **The malignity of sin is not confined to adulthood, but penetrates down to the one most juvenile in their rational aptitude.** In his assault upon humanity in general, and the body of Christ in particular, Satan has not excluded our children. Neither, indeed, has the Holy Spirit omitted the “*children*” in His exhortation to the church.

Even as husbands and wives are a picture of Christ and the church, so children and parents are a depiction God and His sons. Thus the children are told, “*obey your parents.*” This can be stated with three different emphases. **First**, “**OBEY your parents.**” Do not argue with them, compete with them, or ignore them. Obey them! **Second**, “**obey YOUR parents.**” Do not obey your friends parents, obey your own. **Third**, “**obey your PARENTS.**” Do not obey your friends, obey your parents. **DO** not obey your impulses, obey your parents. This assumes the parents are

submit to.” STRONG’S Obedience involves attentiveness, sensitivity, responsiveness, and willingness. In the case of children, it involves the honor, or respect of the parents.

This verse is an exposition of the fifth commandment: “*Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee*” (Ex 20:12). In the Epistle to the Ephesians, the children are told, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth*” (Eph 6:1-3).

What a unique opportunity, therefore, is set before the children. The first commandment with a promise attached to it – a promise that provides an incentive for a whole-hearted response. In the book of the Law, the promise was “*that thy days may be long upon the land*

In his assault upon humanity in general, and the body of Christ in particular, Satan has not excluded our children. Neither, indeed, has the Holy Spirit omitted the “children” in His exhortation to the church.

directing you, and that you are not living for yourself.

Obeying is not heartlessly doing what you are told to do, as an impersonal robot. To “*obey*” means to “listen to, hearken to; of one who on the knock at the door comes to listen who it is; to hearken to a command, be obedient to, and

which the LORD thy God giveth thee” – that is, Canaan. Under the New Covenant, the promise is “*that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long upon the earth.*” Another version reads, “*you will live a long life, full of blessing.*” NLT Any way you look at it, this is a most remarkable promise, coupling

long life with blessing and benefit. Long life can be attended with great sorrow and suffering.

Also, in the Ephesians text, "honor" is described as obeying "your parents."

This text is particularly

Mary said to Him, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, **Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing**" (Luke 2:48). Jesus responded, confirming the superiority of allegiance to the Lord. "And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). Mary and Joseph, we are apprised,

and slaves obeying their masters. It is true at every level that we "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). This is so apparent there should be no further need to elaborate on it.

THIS IS WELL PLEASING TO THE LORD

"... for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." Other versions read, "this pleases the Lord," ^{NIV} "this is your acceptable duty to the Lord," ^{NRSV} and "this is what will please the Lord." ^{NJB}

Children are to be raised in an environment where they become familiar with pleasing the Lord. Here, the Apostle speaks to children, telling them that obeying their parents will please the Lord. He does not simply tell them this is their duty – although it is surely true that it is their duty. **He holds before them a higher motivation, drawing their attention to the marvelous privilege of pleasing God.**

It is said of Enoch, "that he pleased God" (Heb 11:5) – children can do the same! God said of Jesus, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17) – He can be well pleased with children also! It was said of disobedient Israel, "with many of them God was not well pleased" (1 Cor 10:5) – there are also children with whom God is not well pleased! Those within the body of Christ can offer sacrifices with which "God is well pleased" (Heb 13:16) – children can do the same.

I believe one of the great weaknesses of the modern religious youth movement is a failure to communicate this truth – that children can and must be pleasing to the Lord. While the circumference of their activities is much smaller when they are young, and the responsibilities given to them are fewer, they are nevertheless to devote themselves to pleasing the Lord. The confirmation that obeying their parents is, in fact, pleasing to the Lord, is found in the singular promise that is given to them: "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." ^{NIB} **The promise is genuine, coming from the heart of God. Obedient children will surely find it to be true.** Too, they will learn of the faithfulness of God at a tender age.

There is the perfect example of giving honor to one's parents – and Jesus was twelve years old, acquainted with Scripture, knowledgeable of God Himself, and respectful of Mary and Joseph.

noteworthy for our time and place. The worldly society of young people promote rebellion against, and disrespect for, parents. It is found in their manners, their speech, their music, and their general culture. The educational system also promotes these attitudes, giving more attention to fitting in with the social mores of the time, than giving due honor to the parents. While there are some modifying circumstances, children obeying their parents is the kingdom norm. I will discuss this more thoroughly a little later.

A Pattern for the Children

As in every facet of life, the ultimate pattern is the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as their parents, children are to be followers of Christ (1 Cor 11:1). We have an example of Jesus' attitude toward His parents while He was yet a child – a child of twelve years of age. The example reveals the superiority of one's identity with the Father, as well as duly honoring the parents.

When Jesus "was twelve years old," "His parents went to Jerusalem," as they did "every year," to attend "the feast of the passover." This particular time, unknown to His parents, Jesus lingered in Jerusalem. After searching for Him three days, Joseph and Mary found Him "in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking questions." They were "amazed" when they "saw Him." In a state of amazement

"understood not the saying which He spake unto them."

However, after saying that, Jesus "went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart" (Luke 2:41-51). There is the perfect example of giving honor to one's parents – and Jesus was twelve years old, acquainted with Scripture, knowledgeable of God Himself, and respectful of Mary and Joseph.

IN ALL THINGS

"... in all things..." Other versions read, "in everything," ^{NIV} and "always." ^{NJB}

This is the difficult part for the child – just as it is for those who are older, including husbands and wives. The obedience of children is not to be occasional, or only when it is convenient, or suits the desires of the child. This is a particularly weak area in American life, but it must not be an area of weakness within the church, which is "the pillar and ground of the truth."

The phrase "in all things" addresses matters of lawfulness. If, for example, as in some societies, the parents demand that their children steal, or lie, or harm, they are not to do it. In such a case, their greater allegiance is to the Lord. This is also true of wives obeying their husbands, citizens obeying the governor,

FATHERS

“²¹ Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”

The kingdom of God is one in which profound consideration is found. God Himself considers His people. Spiritual life promotes consideration within the body of Christ, with each member being urged to “*esteem other better than themselves*” (Phil 2:3). This same attitude is also to be brought within the home. The husband is to consider his wife, not being harsh, and tenderly caring for her as Jesus cares for the church. The wife is to consider her husband, submitting to him as the church does to Jesus. The children are to consider their parents, obeying and honoring them, knowing this is pleasing in God’s sight. Now a special word is delivered to the fathers concerning their relationship with their children.

PROVOKE NOT YOUR CHILDREN TO ANGER

“*Fathers, provoke not your children to anger . . .*” Other versions read, “*do not provoke your children,*”^{NKJV} “*do not exasperate your children,*”^{NASB} “*do not embitter your children,*”^{NIV} “*do not be hard on your children,*”^{BEBE} “*do not irritate your children,*”^{NJB} “*don’t aggravate your children,*”^{NLT} and “*vex not your children.*”^{YLT}

The word “*provoke*” means “to stir up, excite, and kindle in a bad sense; to irritate or rouse to anger.”^{FRIEBERG} “To cause someone to feel resentment – to make resentful, to make someone bitter.”^{LOUW-NIDA}

Here, the emphasis is not on the will of the children – as when they are required to do something they do not want to do. Rather, the accent is being placed on the ability of the children. **The provoking in question occurs when they are pressed beyond their ability, and thus lose all hope of doing what pleases their parents.** God will not allow his children to be “*tempted above what they are able to bear*” (1 Cor 10:13). However, alas, some fathers are not so mindful of their own children.

Jesus withheld some things from His disciples because they could “*not bear them*” at the time (John 16:12). Our blessed Lord was considerate in a righteous way. Unlike Jesus, the lawyers loaded men down “*with burdens grievous to be borne,*” and would not even “*touch the burdens with one of their fingers*” to bring some relief to the burdened ones (Luke 11:46).

Fathers are not to probe for faults in their children, but be like the Lord, who will not quench a smoking flax, or break a bruised reed (Matt 12:20). They are not to break the confidence and trust of their children by becoming their enemy rather than their tender guides and providers.

In summary, fathers are not to exact more of their children than is reasonable and righteous. They are not to demand more of them than they are able to give. They are not to be inordinate in finding fault. This is such an

appropriate word. I find a great need for it in my own life, and am grateful I have a godly wife who is faithful to put me in remembrance of these things.

LEST THEY BE DISCOURAGED

“*. . . lest they be discouraged.*” Other versions read, “*lose heart,*”^{NASB} “*their spirit may not be broken,*”^{BEBE} “*quit trying.*”^{NLT}

The word “*discouraged*” means “disheartened, dispirited, broken in spirit,”^{THAYER} “feel like giving up, lack motivation,”^{FRIEBERG} “to lose heart.”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} The hearts of the children are tender, and can easily be brought down in discouragement. **It is the business of godly fathers to see to it they are not the cause of such discouragement.** Disheartenment is difficult for anyone to bear, but it is nearly fatal when experienced by children.

THE SCOPE OF TRUTH

I cannot help but note the remarkable scope of the application of Gospel truth. On the one hand our affection is to be set on things above, which things we are to seek. There are the matters of pleasing God, putting off the old man, and putting on the new man. Yet, all of these things display themselves in family conduct. I know of no other message with such remarkable breadth! It attests to the true postulate that salvation impacts upon the entire person. **When a individual is reconciled to God and put into Christ Jesus, the whole of life becomes an arena for living unto the Lord – an arena for blessing, fruitfulness, and glory to God.**

SERVANTS

“^{22a} Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh . . .”

There are some relationships in life that are far from ideal – relationships that even tend to violate the freedom that is realized in Christ Jesus. Paul does not call upon those caught in such a

circumstance to mount a campaign against injustice. There is a better way.

SERVANTS

“*Servants . . .*” Other versions read, “*bondservants,*”^{NKJV} “*slaves,*”^{NASB} and “*bondmen*”^{DARBY}

A “*servant*” is one who is serving

the interests of another. He is the opposite of a “*freeman*,” and is considered the property of someone else. Sometimes slaves were purchased (Deut 28:68). Other times they were born to other slaves while under a master (Ex 21:4). Some made themselves slaves willingly after they had been given the opportunity to be free (Ex 21:5-6). Still others were slaves as the

result of being in an army that was conquered by a superior nation (Deut 21:10-14).

There were many believers who were slaves, even though that distinction did not exist in Christ. As it is written, in Christ *“there is neither bond nor free”* (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). That differentiation, while it may exist upon earth, does not transfer into the kingdom of God. In view of that, believing slaves are told, *“Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather”* (1 Cor 7:21). Thus, if a legitimate opportunity arose to cease from being a slave, the believer could take it, knowing he would not be displeasing to the Lord. Nevertheless, if the opportunity did not arise, slaves were to *“abide in the same calling where he was called”* (1 Cor 7:20).

Some Honorable Servants

Some honorable slaves mentioned in Scripture include Eliezer, servant of Abraham (Gen 15:2; 24:1-11), Joseph (Gen 39:1-2), Elisha’s servant Gehazi (2 Kgs 4:12), and Onesimus (Phile 1:10-12).

Abraham’s Servants

Abraham had servants whom he classified as *“servants”* born in his house or bought with his money (Gen 17:13). The patriarch was a good master, and there is no parallel between his servants and the notions of slavery that have been developed in the world – example, Ezek 27:12-13). In those spiritually primitive times, his *“manservants”* and *“maidservants”* were recognized as a blessing from the Lord (Gen 24:34-35). Therefore, he treated them kindly. There is no record of Abraham abusing, giving away, or selling, one of his servants.

Voluntary Slavery

During Old Covenant times, there was such a thing as voluntary slavery. There were two kinds of this type of servitude. First, a slave that was qualified for freedom, whether during the year of Jubilee, or after seven years, could opt to stay with his master. In such a case, the servant would remain from that time until his death with the master (Ex 21:5-6). Second, a person might sell himself to someone as a slave in order to pay off a debt (Lev 25:47). Under the Law, in all cases involving slaves, or bond servants, they were to be treated kindly and

equitably (Lev 25:43).

No Disadvantage in Christ

The fact that someone was a slave put them at no disadvantage in Christ, or in the body of Christ. Their *“eternal inheritance”* (Heb 9:15) would not be less because of their status in this world. Thus

“better way” – a way that will allow the Lord to work in the behalf of the slave. The Spirit is admonishing us concerning maintaining an environment in which the working of the Lord can be perceived and experienced.

This is not a general address to all

The servant is not given the luxury of selecting which commands he prefers, or choosing the ones that are more easily fulfilled. With the exception of something that violated the will of the Lord, the servant was to obey everything he was told to do.

they were to *“care not for it,”* or *“not be concerned about it.”*^{NKJV} This, however, did not mean they could be indifferent about their earthly circumstance, considering as though it did not exist. **Within the framework of a condition they could not change, they were to conduct themselves in strict keeping with the manner of the kingdom of God’s dear Son into which they had been translated.**

While all manner of sound arguments could be introduced concerning the impropriety of someone being the slave of another human, this is not the approach of the Spirit. The Law did spell out the unlawfulness of kidnaping a person in order to sell them – like shanghaiing. Such a person was to be put to death under the Law of Moses. *“If a man is found kidnapping any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and mistreats him or sells him, then that kidnapper shall die; and you shall put away the evil from among you”*^{NKJV} (Deut 24:7). Earlier in the history of our country, this practice was quite common, as you no doubt know. It was a wicked practice, and can in no way be justified.

Whether or not the *“slaves”* now addressed by the Spirit had fallen into that kind of condition through such circumstances, we do not know. However, rather than marshaling all slaves to civil disobedience, the people are shown *“a*

the slaves of the empire. It is confined to those who are members of the body of Christ. That is the body of people among whom God dwells, and through whom the Lord Jesus works. **This body of people is not charged with governmental correction or social restructure.** They have been called to higher things.

OBEDIENCE IN ALL THINGS

“... obey in all things...” Other versions read, *“in everything,”*^{NIV} *“do all the orders.”*^{BBE}

The servant is not given the luxury of selecting which commands he prefers, or choosing the ones that are more easily fulfilled. **With the exception of something that violated the will of the Lord, the servant was to obey everything he was told to do.** We do have an example of a servant who refused to do something that violated the will of the Lord, even though he was told to do so by the wife of his master. This was Joseph, who refused to yield to the will of *“his master’s wife.”* She said, *“Lie with me.”* He *“refused”* to do so (Gen 39:7-8,12).

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, servants are told, *“be obedient to them who are your masters”* (Eph 6:5). Paul admonished Titus to *“exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters”* (Tit 2:9). Peter wrote, *“Servants, be subject to your masters”* (1 Pet 2:18). **There is,**

then, no question about the servant's responsibility to his master – even of the slave to his owner. This is not the master's word to the servant, but the Word of the Lord of glory to the master himself. It is not what the master expects of the servant, but what the Lord expects of the master.

It is one thing to tell a wife to submit to her husband, or children to obey their parents. It is quite another to tell a slave to obey his master. **In every facet of life, the child of God must have faith to live, faith to obey, and faith to hope.** How significantly this is made known in this word.

The Employee and the Employer

In our country, the servant-master

is unusually honored or dishonored. It does not suggest that master-servant matters are superior to those of the home. It does suggest that it should be given far more attention than men are prone to do.

Christian employees are not to be noted for their recalcitrance, laziness, and failure to do what they are told. Their conduct is to be exemplary on the job, as well as in the home and in the assembly. More will be said on this in the succeeding verses.

Student and Teacher

This principle also applies to the teacher-student relationship. While there may be some areas where the similarity breaks down, it generally applies. With few exceptions, unless the teacher

reckoning.^{NJB}

While it is true that those in Christ have “one” who is their “Master” (Matt 23:8), this does not mean we take orders from no one else. It does mean that in matters pertaining to the Lord, we are ultimately obligated to God alone. However, there are spiritual masters over us, whom we are to “obey” (Heb 13:17). Wives “obey” their husbands (Tit 2:5). Children “obey” their parents (Eph 6:1). Citizens are “subject” to governmental powers (Rom 13:1-2). Now, servants are admonished to “obey” their “masters according to the flesh.” All of this is to be done “as unto the Lord.

All of these associations – in particular servants obeying their masters – are temporal: i.e. “According to the flesh.” They only apply to this world, and only pertain to temporary associations. Once we gain this perspective, it will lessen any inconvenience or distaste associated with such obedience. It is important to note that **earthly associations are not to be neglected.** Faith deals with how we conduct ourselves in these matters.

It is important to again note that **the highest relationship is that of a soul to God.** At no point, and at no time, are human relationships to be permitted to overshadow this association. **Wrong cannot and will not be overlooked, regardless of who commands that it be done.** If a master commands the slave to steal, he must **not** do so. If the master cites our text as proof the slave must obey, the slave still cannot steal. He is subject to a higher law than that of his master. **Wherever there is a conflict between what men demand and the will of the Lord, we are, without exception, to obey God, not men.**

It is one thing to tell a wife to submit to her husband, or children to obey their parents. It is quite another to tell a slave to obey his master. In every facet of life, the child of God must have faith to live, faith to obey, and faith to hope.

relationship is most precisely seen in employer-employee associations. That circumstance is much like the volunteer servant who sold his services to a master. That is very much what an employee does – he sells his time, receiving compensation on a voluntary basis. This is of particular interest to me, knowing that in this text, much more is said of the master-slave relationship, than of family associations. That means this is an area where men are especially vulnerable, and where the Lord

requires the student to do something that violates the good will and purpose of God, the Christian student should yield to the will of the teacher. This is a matter in which due consideration should be given.

MASTERS ACCORDING TO THE FLESH

“... our masters according to the flesh . . .” Other versions read, “masters on earth,”^{NASB} “earthly masters,”^{NIV} “Your natural masters,”^{BBE} “human masters,”^{NAB} and “according to human

MENPLEASERS VERSUS SINGLENES OF HEART

^{422b} **... not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God.”**

The Spirit now instructs us in the manner in which service to men is to be

rendered. It will at once become apparent that even those in a most servile situation are to live with an acute awareness of the God to whom they have been reconciled, and the Christ who has accomplished that reconciliation. We cannot overemphasize

this, for we are living in a society that promotes self will, and thinking of one's self “above that which is written” (1 Cor 4:6). All manner of pressure is being placed on believers to please men, and to do things to be seen of men.

NOT WITH EYESERVICE, AS MEN PLEASERS

“ . . . not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; . . . ” Other versions read, “not with external service, as those who merely please men,”^{NASB} “not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor,”^{NIV} “not only when being watched and in order to please them,”^{NIV} “not serving to the eye, as pleasing men,”^{DOUAY} “not only when being watched, as currying favor,”^{NAB} “not only when you are under their eye, as if you had only to please human beings,”^{NJB} and “Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you.”^{NLT}

Eyeservice

The Epistle to the Ephesians reads exactly the same: “not with eyeservice” (Eph 6:6). **“Eyeservice” means the servant needs to be watched, else he will not fulfill his duty.** The word means, “service performed ONLY under the master’s eyes,”^{THAYER} “service rendered without dedication or a sense of inner obligation but mainly to attract attention,”^{FRIEBERG} “rendered merely for the sake of impressing others,”^{UBS} “To serve with a view to impressing others – eyeservice, to serve in order to call attention to oneself,”^{LOUW-NIDA}

Whether in employment, education, or even church circles, everyone has encountered this kind of person – **the individual who adjusts his conduct to meet the approval of men.** Otherwise, such people live only for themselves, and do only what pleases them in the flesh.

Believing servants are to be more conscious of the eye of the Lord than the eye of their master. God always sees. Their masters according to the flesh only see occasionally. In the carrying out of legitimate earthly responsibilities, there is no time when the believer can be sloppy, nonchalant, or neglectful of his duty. The earthly master may not behold such occasions, but God in heaven will!

We have already been admonished to do every thing, whether in word of deed, “in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him” (3:17). This is one way in which this is accomplished.

Let it be clear, a

consciousness of the eye of the Lord being upon you provides a far greater incentive for faithfulness and productivity than the eyes of men! Among the people of God, there is no place for any who remain among those who can only be trusted to do what is right when they are under the watchful eyes of taskmasters. While believers may very well begin with this trait, they are to grow out of it. They must come to the place where they can be trusted to do what is right. Thus Paul wrote, **“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”** (Phil 1:27).

Zealously avoiding “eyeservice” is not, therefore, confined to “servants.” This is to be a common virtue found among all of the children of God. Here, the “servants” are permitted to lead us, as it were, in this noble attitude.

Menpleasers

In one place Paul wrote, **“Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of**

Pleasing men involves “studying to please men, and courting their favor.”^{THAYER} The word means “desiring to please people; substantively, one who sacrifices principle to please someone of superior authority,”^{FRIEBERG} “one who acts merely to please men,”^{UBS} and “at the sacrifice of some principle pleasing people.”^{LOUW-NIDA}

The believer, even when a servant, must remember that he has been bought with a price, and is not his own (1 Cor 6:19-20). His primary aim is not to please his master, but his God! Ultimately, he will be judged by God, not his master.

Servants, of course, are not the only people who are not to be “menpleasers.” **There is no aspect of life for any child of God, in which pleasing men is allowed to become preeminent.** Living to God does not allow for such a frame of mind.

Speaking of being a “menpleaser,” Paul affirmed that at the precise point where one’s primary motivation was to please men, he abruptly ceased to be the servant of Christ. **“ . . . for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ”** (Gal 1:10). Other versions read, **“If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ,”**

Believing servants are to be more conscious of the eye of the Lord than the eye of their master. God always sees. Their masters according to the flesh only see occasionally. In the carrying out of legitimate earthly responsibilities, there is no time when the believer can be sloppy, nonchalant, or neglectful of his duty.

many, that they may be saved” (1 Cor 10:33). Howbeit, this is not the meaning of “menpleasers.” Paul was seeking the spiritual profit of all men, and in that sense alone sought to please them, not casting stumbling blocks in their way. **This text speaks of pleasing men as a primary motivation – particularly with regard to gaining personal advantage.**

^{NASB} and **“or if yet men I did please -- Christ’s servant I should not be.”**^{YLT}

Those who are faithless, or unbelieving, cannot process this kind of word – either in their hearts or their minds. This exhortation chafes against the flesh, and causes the “old man” to writhe in pain. Nevertheless, it is to be fulfilled.

SINGleness OF HEART

“... but in singleness of heart...”

Other versions read, “sincerity of heart,” NKJV/NASB/NIV “wholeheartedly,” NRSV “all you heart,” BBE and “simplicity of heart.” DARBY

The Lord does not allow for a divided heart (Hos 10:2), which is another way of referring to an attempt to serve two masters (Matt 6:24). That is, the servant was not to try and serve his master with one part of his heart, and the Lord with another part – like secular and spiritual. He could not step out of the role of a member of the body of Christ while working for his earthly master, then step back into a spiritual role when he assembled with the saints.

The Epistle to the Ephesians also

your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” (1 Pet 2:18-20). All of this is done out of a “conscience toward God,” or because he is “aware of God.” NIV Ah, that will take a lot of grace! However, a lot of grace is available, and the servant is to avail himself of it.

The servant is not at liberty to withhold subjection from a master who appears unworthy of it. Only if the master requires something that God

the case at all. The Spirit reasons with us about this.

“And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, **because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.** These things teach and exhort” (1 Tim 6:2). A believing master, manager, teacher, or the likes, is worthy of even more effort. They are members of the same body, and are loved by God. It is also right that they should be loved by their servants. They are also “partakers of the benefit” – enjoying certain advantages that are given to the children of God. **Why should some of those benefits not come from their believing servants?** The good and faithful servant will, indeed, be a source of blessing to a believing master.

FEARING GOD

“... fearing God.” Other versions read, “fearing the Lord,” NASB “... with reverence for the Lord,” NIV “out of respect for the Master,” NJB “because of your reverent fear of the Lord.” NLT

While the word “fearing” contains the idea of reverence, that is not its primary meaning – at least not in the sense in which “reverence” is ordinarily understood. From the standpoint of language, the word “fearing” comes from the Greek word φοβούμενοι (phob-ou-men-oi), which means “to be put to flight by, to fear or be afraid, to be struck with fear, to be seized with alarm... to be struck with amazement.” Under that canopy, the word includes the idea of “reverence, veneration, and to treat with deference or reverential obedience.” STRONG’S

In my perception, fearing God includes the following.

- ✚ When faced with the Lord, running to Him rather than from Him (Psa 66:16).
- ✚ Zealously avoiding anything that provokes or alienates Him (Neh 7:2; Job 1:1).
- ✚ Deferring to His will when faced with conflicting influences (Ex 1:17).
- ✚ Being afraid of confronting the Lord while in a sinful state (Gen 3:10).

Maybe if an employee works for a very kind and patient employer he can be less diligent. It might be thought that because a student had a very lenient teacher, there is no need to study hard and do good work. However, this is not the case at all.

emphasizes this point: “with good will doing service, as to the Lord” (Eph 6:7). Other versions read, “Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women,” NRSV and “do your work readily, as to the Lord, and not to men.” BBE That is, the servant is not to be oblivious of his natural master, but to “please him well in all things, not answering again,” or being argumentative (Tit 2:9). He is to yield his service “with all respect,” NASB being mindful of him and his will within the greater context of a mindfulness of the Lord (2 Pet 2:18).

What About Thoughtless Masters?

What is a servant to do when he has a thoughtless and abusive master? What of an employee that has an inconsiderate manager, or a student that has a harsh teacher? What is to be done in that case?

The Lord speaks to this issue, and with great clarity. “Servants, be subject to

does not allow can obedience be withheld. Good and gentle masters are not the only kind that manage men, as most of us know all too well. There are also the “froward,” or the “unreasonable,” NASB and “harsh.” NIV However, the Spirit reasons, it is better – yea, more “thankworthy,” or “commendable,” NIV when a person suffers for doing what is right, than when he pays the price for doing what is wrong. Now, there is a line of reasoning the world cannot accept. Still, this is the manner of the kingdom, and we are adapt to it.

What About a Believing Master?

Perhaps, it might be reasoned, if the believing slave has a believing master, his service can be more casual and less hearty. Maybe if an employee works for a very kind and patient employer he can be less diligent. It might be thought that because a student had a very lenient teacher, there is no need to study hard and do good work. However, this is not

- ✚ Being moved to depart from iniquity (Job 28:28).
- ✚ Being constrained to serve the Lord faithfully and with a perfect heart (2 Chron 19:9).
- ✚ To hate evil (Prov 8:13).

✚ An spirit of mind that keeps us from coming short of the promises of God (Heb 4:1).

In short, fearing the Lord is living with an acute awareness of God – an awareness that dominates all other perceptions. It has been well

said, "Where true reverence of the Master is, there is singleness of heart, for His eye searches the heart." JOSEPH BEET The person who fears the Lord knows the Lord "*tries the feelings and the heart*" NASB (Jer 11:20), giving to every man "*according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings*" (Jer 17:10). That knowledge assists us in developing sensitivity to our conduct.

DO IT HEARTILY

"²³ And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

While this word is addressed to "servants," it is not confined to them. **This is another expression of the manner of the kingdom – the nature in which new life is conducted in this world.** In fact, it is an elaboration of a previous word that is addressed to all saints: "*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him*" (Col 3:17). That word was a summation of the Spirit's guidance concerning the activities of the assemblies of brethren. It was also an introduction to His consideration of domestic life.

WHATSOEVER YE DO

"And whatsoever ye do . . . " Another version reads, "*Whatever your task.*" NRSV This differs slightly from "*whatsoever ye do in word or deed,*" which focuses on expression. **Here the emphasis is on the task, or project, that is being undertaken, and the manner in which it is carried out.**

All justified ones must come to the point where they think in terms of "*whatever*" they do – a manner that does not compartmentalize life. **There is no facet of life that can be fulfilled apart from a lively awareness of the Lord who has bought us** (1 Cor 6:19). In our world, the term "*whatever*" has come to indicate indifference – a way of dismissing what is said to the individual. But that is not what the word means here. The Spirit uses it in such a way as to engage our interest, not dismiss it – to marshal our resources, not dismiss them.

A Brief Word

The children of God must take care not to adopt the jargon of a world that is alienated to God. **Words are a vital aspect of kingdom life, and ought not to be spoken in such a way**

reasons for doing everything. We are compelled from within, which frame of mind contrasts with "*eyeservice*" and "*menpleasers,*" which are from without.

It is possible for those whose

This word assumes that men and women are in their various stations of life through Divine appointment, and not mere happenstance – that God has "determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live"

disarms the soul. Jesus said, "*For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*" (Mat 12:37). We must not allow the world to influence us to adopt loose and meaningless language, so that our speech is no longer seasoned with salt.

DO IT HEARTILY

" . . . do it heartily . . . " Other versions read, "*do your work heartily,*" NASB "*work at it with all your heart,*" NIV "*put yourselves into it,*" NRSV "*do it readily,*" BBE "*put your heart into it,*" NJB "*work hard and cheerfully,*" NLT and "*out of soul work.*" YLT

"*Heartily*" means, "out from one's inner life or self." STRONG'S That is, the motivation for doing the work comes from deep within, not merely because men are told to do something. The postulate is that in Christ we have higher and more noble

work tends to be of a repetitive nature – like that of a servant – to perform their tasks heartlessly, or mechanically. In such a case, their heart is not in it, but they merely work by rote, or empty habit. In such a case, the task becomes long and tends to be tedious. Such work is not acceptable to the Lord, whom we serve in every facet of our lives.

In a similar word to servants, the Epistle the Ephesians reads, "*as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart*" (Eph 6:6). **This word assumes that men and women are in their various stations of life through Divine appointment,** and not mere happenstance – that God has "*determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live*" NIV (Acts 17:26). The Lord may very well open an opportunity for them to occupy another position – such as a slave being made a

freeman (1 Cor 7:21). However, unless a consciousness of the Lord is maintained IN their activity, such an opportunity will not be known.

God's people are not to be known for half-hearted work.

another, or speak to each in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, let us do it heartily!

Bring the heart into the home. Husbands, wives, and children are to fulfill their obligations heartily. Not

a word to us all. The servants, therefore, become our leaders in this matter.

AS TO THE LORD, NOT UNTO MEN

“... as to the Lord, and not unto men.” Other versions read, “as for the Lord rather than for men,” ^{NASB} “as working for the Lord, not for men,” ^{NIV} “as done for the Lord, and not for your masters,” ^{NRSV} “as serving the Lord and not men,” ^{RSV} and “as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.” ^{NLT}

Rather than working to be seen of men (“eyeservice”), the servant is to perform the work as unto the Lord – presenting it as an offering to the Lord. Rather than seeking the good will of men (“menpleasers”), the servant is to exert himself to please the Lord IN what he is doing. He is to take what he has been given to do as a directive from the Lord. He is to fulfill that word as though the finished task was to be presented to the Lord.

The reason for this exhortation is found in the words that follow. **Working heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men, is to be done in view of what is ahead.** We are to be motivated by reality, not mere imaginations. The Spirit will now set before us what will be realized in the future – a future that it is not possible to avoid. Now, He is calling upon us to live in view of what is surely coming – to live in preparation for that time.

Christian employees, which most closely parallels the role of a “servant,” are to be the best employees. Compelled from within, their work is to be done heartily, not perfunctorily. This is not a mere goal of life, but something believers are to see that they do.

Whether it is a husband, wife, child, or servant, work is to be done “heartily.” If we are given a task to do by a superior, we are to put our hearts into that task. Our hearts and minds are to be in it.

Ponder the effects this would have on the body of Christ. Let preachers approach preaching in this manner. Let teachers fulfill their teaching in this way. Students, fulfill your assignments with all of your heart. Elders and deacons, throw yourselves into your work. When we sing, let us do it with all of our heart. When we listen, let us do so purposefully and with godly intent. When we admonish one

mechanically.

Christian employees, which most closely parallels the role of a “servant,” are to be the best employees. Compelled from within, their work is to be done heartily, not perfunctorily. This is not a mere goal of life, but something believers are to see that they do. On the job, they are not allowed the luxury of stepping out of their role as “the light of the world” and “the salt of the earth” (Matt 5:13,14).

There is some sense in which we all are “servants,” and thus the word to servants, as ordinarily perceived, becomes

KNOWING YOU WILL RECEIVE THE REWARD

²⁴ **Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.**”

In Christ Jesus, motivation has reached new heights. Under the Law, men were compelled by the threat of death. As it is written, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who

through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb 2:14-15). There are adjustments in life that can be made in an effort to avoid dying, or going to hell. However, that is not a sufficient motive for all of life. There must come a point where we really understand the “issues of life” (Prov 4:23) – a time when we possess high incentives.

KNOWING

“Knowing . . .” Other versions read, “since you know,” ^{NIV/NRSV} “being certain,” ^{BBE} and “having known.” ^{YLT}

This is not knowledge to be acquired, but knowledge to be used. It is assumed that the individuals being addressed already know this. Now they are being admonished to “remember” what the Lord will do. ^{NLT}

Sound doctrine includes the declaration of the things that follow. **Where there is a fundamental ignorance of them, there has either been a rejection of the basic message of the Gospel, or it has not been heard.** Wherever the sound of the

Gospel has gone forth, there has been an announcement of things to happen in *“the world to come.”* The day of judgment, and the things that will take place at that time, are declared in the Gospel of Christ.

Spiritual life is lived out within the framework of understanding, or what is comprehended. If life is really a mystery, and the future remains under the shroud of ignorance, we will not do well in our living. This is not only true of servants, but of every member of the body of Christ.

The postulate of this text is this: **if we are to do our work as unto the Lord, and not unto men, we must have a strong reason for doing so.** In this matter naivety, simplicity, and ignorance are our foes, not our friends.

RECEIVING FROM THE LORD

“ . . . that of the Lord ye shall receive . . . ” Other versions read, *“from the Lord you will receive,”* NKJV/NASB *“the Lord will give you,”* BBE and *“the Lord will repay you.”* NJB

Just as our identity with the Lord is personal, so His dealings with us in the coming age will be personal. Now, in this life, the Lord speaks to us through *“ministers . . . even as the Lord gave to every man”* (1 Cor 3:5). This promise, however, speaks of something the Lord Himself will give us – something we will receive from His own hand.

Here is the manner in which we work as *“to the Lord.”* **It is by considering what we will receive from Him.** It is not that we simply view the Lord as our “Boss,” so to speak. We are to perceive Him as the One who will duly compensate us for our labors – even the labors of a slave for his master.

Even though, on the surface, the work appears to be done because of human demands, and for men, yet that is not the case for the one who is in Christ. For such a person, the work is really being done for the Lord, and the Lord will give the ultimate compensation for the work.

THE REWARD OF THE INHERITANCE

“ . . . the reward of the inheritance.” Other versions read,

“receive an inheritance . . . as a reward,” NIV *“the inheritance as your reward,”* NRSV *“the recompense of the inheritance,”* ASV *“the reward of the heritage,”* BBE *“the due payment of the inheritance,”* NAB and *“the Lord will repay you by making you His heirs.”* NJB

Here is an aspect of spiritual life that must be seen. While salvation is *“not of works”* (Eph 2:9; Tit 3:5), that is not the case with the reward. Justification is not based upon works (Rom 4:2; Gal 2:16), but the reward is on another

✚ *“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be”* (Rev 22:12).

✚ *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a **Rewarder** of them that **diligently seek Him**”* (Heb 11:6).

Wages

There is such a thing as good

Spiritual life is lived out within the framework of understanding, or what is comprehended. If life is really a mystery, and the future remains under the shroud of ignorance, we will not do well in our living.

principle. Our calling was *“not according to our works”* (2 Tim 1:9), but our rewards will be. The Holy Spirit has extended Himself to make this clear.

✚ *“Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own **reward** according to **his own labor**”* (1 Cor 3:8).

✚ *“If any man’s **work** abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a **reward**”* (1 Cor 3:14).

✚ *“For if I do this thing willingly, I have a **reward**: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me”* (1 Cor 9:17).

✚ *“For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, **The laborer is worthy of his reward**”* (1 Tim 5:18).

✚ *“Cast not away therefore **your confidence**, which hath great recompense of **reward**”* (Heb 10:35).

✚ *“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which **we have wrought**, but that we receive a full **reward**”* (2 John 1:8).

“wages” received from the Lord. As it is written, *“And he that reapeth **receiveth wages**, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together”* (John 4:36). Jesus said the kingdom of heaven *“is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to **hire laborers** for his vineyard”* (Matt 20:1). Those laborers were given wages.

Proportionate to Faithfulness

In the parable of the talents, Jesus taught that **Divine compensation will be directly related to the manner in which the Lord’s goods were handled.** The servants were given differing responsibilities: five talents, two talents, and one talent. Each servant handled their goods uniquely. They returned varying amounts: ten talents, five talents, and no talent. They received divergent compensation: ten cities, five cities, banishment (Matt 25:20-30).

The Inheritance

For the child of God, the inheritance is everything. This is not an inheritance in this world, but in the world to come. There is a sense in which we, like Abraham, do not receive an inheritance in this world (Acts 7:5). He did have possessions in this world, but not an

inheritance – and there is a difference.

- ✚ One of the purposes of being built up in the faith is in order that the Lord may give us *“an inheritance among all them which are sanctified”* (Acts 20:32).
- ✚ Those who come to Christ not only receive *“forgiveness of sins,”* but an *“inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith”* (Acts 26:18).
- ✚ The gift of the Holy Spirit is the *“earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession”*[our bodies] (Eph 1:13-14).
- ✚ In Christ Jesus, God has qualified us

the manner in which he carried out his earthly responsibilities!

The world to come is something like Canaan. Although all of the saints will inherit it (Matt 5:5), and be given charge of it (Heb 2:5-7), it will be distributed *“by lot,”* as was Canaan (Num 26:55-56; Josh 13:6; 14:2). The **right** to have a portion of the world to come was determined by the Lord Jesus. **The actual measure you possess will be, in part, determined by your faithfulness, and the manner in which you lived in this world.**

Whether you are bond or free, male or female, husband or wife, or even a child, you are to live your life with a mind to obtaining that inheritance. The

Here there is a holy mingling of two different thoughts. *“Reward”* has to do with labor. *“Inheritance”* has to do with being the sons of God. In the same way that *“mercy and truth are met together,”* and *“righteousness and peace have kissed each other”* (Psa 85:10), **so reward and inheritance are joined together in Christ.** From one point of view, they appear to be unsuitable to dwell together. From another view, however, the salvation of God has enabled them to be joined together.

YOU ARE SERVING THE LORD CHRIST

“... for ye serve the Lord Christ.” Other versions read, *“It is the Lord Christ whom you serve,”* ^{NASB} *“It is the Lord Christ you are serving,”* ^{NIV} *“for you are the servants of the Lord Christ,”* ^{BBE} and *“the Master you are serving is Christ.”* ^{NLT}

This circumstance is **not** the way it ought to be. This is the way it **is!** Whether the work is performed satisfactorily or unsatisfactorily, the Lord takes it personal. **As the redeemed we belong to Him, and He is the One we are serving – even in servile areas of life in this world.** Thus, in a very real sense, every believer is a “full time servant.” In fact, there is no other kind of *“servant.”*

The Lord Christ

By using the unique expression *“Lord Christ,”* the Spirit emphasizes that **part of the stewardship given to the Son is that of duly compensating His disciples.** He is *“Lord”* of that distribution, and will do so as *“the Christ,”* who is the appointed Representative and Judge of humanity.

If earthly masters are not fair with their servants – in particular those who are Christ Jesus – **the servants are to know there is another Lord: THE Master in heaven, who observes their most minute labors, and will duly compensate them. He will not overlook their faithfulness to Himself, or the humble manner in which they submitted themselves to His will.** A faithful record of their attitude and behavior is recorded in the books. On the one that that will really count, the books will be opened. This is a most blessed consideration.

The right to have a portion of the world to come was determined by the Lord Jesus. The actual measure you possess will be, in part, determined by your faithfulness, and the manner in which you lived in this world.

for *“the inheritance of the saints in light”* (Col 1:12).

- ✚ Jesus is presently *“the Mediator of the new testament,”* in order that *“they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance”* (Heb 9:15).
- ✚ We have been born again in order to obtain *“an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you”* (1 Pet 1:14).

Associated with Working as unto the Lord

Here, the faithful servant who works as unto the Lord is told to do so **KNOWING** he will receive the reward of the inheritance from the Lord. **That eternal reward is associated with**

fulfillment of your responsibilities in this world are directly related to that inheritance. In the case of a slave, although in this world he was under the control of a master, yet a record was kept of his labors in heaven. Whether, in this world, the compensation he received appeared to be fair or not, in the world to come every work performed unto the Lord will be duly rewarded.

Employees, take this attitude to your job! Husbands, wives, and children – have this frame of mind in the home. By so doing, you will be laying up *“for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal”* (Matt 6:20). That certainly does open the door to remarkable possibilities!

A Holy Mingling

THE FUTURE OF WRONGDOING

“²⁵ But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.”

If there is a reward for doing what is right, there must also be due compensation for doing what is wrong. If this is not the case, there really is no justifying point in rewarding those who “do good” (1 Tim 6:18; Heb 13:16; James 4:17; 1 Pet 3:11). Just as surely as the Lord is “not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labor of love” (Heb 6:10), so He will not ignore those who do wrong.

HE THAT DOETH WRONG

“But he that doeth wrong . . .” Other versions read, “the wrongdoer,” NRSV “he that does a wrong,” DARBY “if you do what is wrong,” NLT and “he who is doing unrighteously.” YLT

To do “wrong” is to “act unjustly or wickedly, to sin, to have violated the laws in some way,” THAYER “acting unjustly, be in the wrong, injure,” FRIEBERG “treat unjustly, harm, be in the wrong,” UBS “to hurt or harm, with the implication of doing something which is wrong and undeserved,” LOUW-NIDA and “to do wrong, wrongdoing.” LIDDELL-SCOTT

There is absolutely no provision in Christ for doing what is wrong – no allowance for improper conduct. Men may be lenient in such matters, but the “Lord Christ,” whom we serve, is not.

There are two ways we can view this text, and there is value in them both.

The Servant Himself

First, this refers to any “wrong” committed by the servant himself. If the servant does not obey his master, he has done wrong in withholding such obedience, unless it be that he has been required by the master to do what is “wrong” before the Lord. Any servant that fails to do what the Spirit admonishes him to do, has done “wrong.”

In a word given to Titus, Paul mentions possible “wrong” conduct by servants. He told Titus to “Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own

masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (Titus 2:10).

“Not answering again,” is talking back, or arguing, with the master. The laws of our land may allow for such a response, but the Lord does not. To be “argumentative”^{NASB} is “wrong.”

“Purloining” is “pilfering,”^{NKJV} or “stealing,”^{NIV} doing so secretly. The word “purloin” means “to set apart, separate, or divide for one’s self; to embezzle, withdraw covertly, and

SHALL RECEIVE FOR THE WRONG

“ . . . shall receive for the wrong which he hath done . . . ” Other versions read, “will be repaid for what he has done,”^{NKJV} “will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done,”^{NASB} “will be repaid for his wrong,”^{NIV} “will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done,”^{NRSV} and “will have punishment for the wrong he has done.”^{BBE}

The sobering nature of these words is arresting – and so they are intended to be. **The people of God must zealously avoid any theology that neutralizes these words, or moves**

The sobering nature of these words is arresting – and so they are intended to be. The people of God must zealously avoid any theology that neutralizes these words, or moves them to take them lightly.

appropriate to one’s own use.”^{FRIEBERG} This is what Achan did when he coveted and took the Babylonish garment, a wedge of gold, and two hundred shekels of silver (Josh 7:21). It is also what Ananias and Sapphira did when they kept part of the price of their land for themselves (Acts 5:3). It is what Gehazi, Elisha’s servant, subtly did when he sought to obtain garments from Naaman (2 Kgs 5:20-22). It is what Judas did when he acted as the treasurer of Jesus and His disciples (John 12:6). All such doing is “wrong.”

Whether it is among the fellowship of believers, in the home, or in the work place, the children of God are to maintain a lively consciousness of this fact: the Lord will deal with those who do what is “wrong.”

The Master

If the servant is being wronged by his master, he is to be confident that the Lord is beholding that as well. The Lord will avenge the servant, and punish his master for doing what was “wrong.”

them to take them lightly. It is ever true that every member of the body of Christ, whether a “servant” or not, “must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10). There is a price to be paid for doing wrong, and we do well to remember it.

Speaking of this recompense, the Thessalonians were reminded, “the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified” (1 Thess 4:6). It would be good if there was more forewarning and testifying of this reality in our time. There is certainly a profound need for it.

NO RESPECT OF PERSONS

“ . . . and there is no respect of persons.” Other versions read, “there is no partiality,”^{NKJV} “and that without partiality,”^{NASB} “and there is no favoritism,”^{NIV} “without respect for any man’s position,”^{BBE} and “God has no favorites who can get away with evil.”^{NLT}

It is good to know this is the Divine nature! **God is not tolerant of wrongdoing in some, while intolerant of it in others – even though much theology declares that He is.**

✚ Moses was close to God – one of the very few men with whom God spoke “mouth to mouth” (Num 12:7-8). Yet, when he did wrong in becoming provoked by the people, he suffered the consequences, not being allowed to enter the promised land (Num 20:12). When he failed to have his son circumcised, God met him and sought

to kill him (Ex 4:25). With God, “there is no respect of persons.”

✚ David was a man after God’s own heart. Yet, when he did wrong in sinning with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:2-4), he suffered for the “wrong” that he had done (2 Sam 12:9-12). With God, “there is no respect of persons.”

✚ Solomon is described as a man whom the Lord especially loved (2 Sam 12:24). Yet, when he sinned in spite of the fact that the Lord “had appeared to him twice” (1 Kgs 11:9), he suffered for the “wrong” that he had

done. The kingdom was taken from him (1 Kgs 11:11). With God, “there is no respect of persons.”

This word is to be taken seriously by every child of God. The Lord is not only faithful to His people, He is faithful to Himself: “He cannot deny Himself.” **It is His nature to recompense wrong.** It is to be our nature not to commit wrong. If wrong is committed, the Lord will not overlook it because we are His children. The earthly position that a person occupies will not bring such exemption either. Serious thinking on this will impact upon human conduct.

MASTERS

“^{4:1} Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”

It is the manner of the Spirit to be thorough in His instruction, not allowing for any individual to imagine they are excluded from responsibility to God. In this world, men tend to imagine themselves as not being answerable to anyone. There is an inordinate promotion of this kind of attitude in our country.

your slaves with what is right and fair,”
NIV “*treat your slaves just and fairly,*”
NRSV “*render unto your servants that which is just and equal,*”
ASV “*provide your slaves with what is right and fair,*”
NIB “*make sure your slaves are given what is upright and fair,*”
NJB “*be just and fair to your slaves,*”
NLT and “*that which is righteous and equal to the servants, give ye.*”
YLT

Here the Lord comes to the aid of believing servants, confirming His interest in, and care for, them. Even in

master is not at liberty to do “wrong” to his servant, any more than the servant can do “wrong” unto him. The emphasis here is to do what is proper, or right.

Something that is “just” includes kindness and consideration. There is the idea of thoughtfulness, so that the aptitude of the servant is taken into consideration in the distribution of responsibilities.

That Which is Equal

There are three aspects to this equality.

Brethren in Christ

First, believing masters are to remember that their believing servants are also their brethren in Christ Jesus. In regards to spiritual life, their servants are coworkers and fellowheirs.

Daily Needs

Second, This would include proper food, raiment, and housing. As Solomon provided for his household (1 Kgs 4:23), and Nehemiah for his (Neh 5:18), so the godly master is to provide appropriate daily provisions for his servants. This should also take into consideration any family that the servant has (Ex 21:5). The master must not be a “hard man.”

Compensation

Third, what is “equal” also refers

In this world, men tend to imagine themselves as not being answerable to anyone. There is an inordinate promotion of this kind of attitude in our country. Our text throws such imaginations down to the ground, showing them to have no place among the elect.

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GIVING WHAT IS JUST AND EQUAL

“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal . . .” Other versions read, “give your bondservants what is just and fair,”
NKJV “grant your slaves justice and fairness,”
NASB “provide

this world, He seeks their welfare by addressing their masters. As with the other exhortations, this is not a word the servants are to promote, but that the masters are to obey.

That Which is Just

Something that is “just” is upright, righteous, virtuous, and in keeping with the commands of Gods. It is something that is right or proper. The

to compensation, or wages. **There should be an obvious association between the wages that are given and the work that has been rendered.** You may recall that James severely upbraided some who were not “equal” in the wages they gave their servants. Their maltreatment was noted in heaven. *“Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth”* [hosts or armies] (James 5:4).

KNOWING

“... knowing...” Other versions read “conscious of,”^{BBE} “realizing that,”^{NAB} “because you know,”^{NIB} and “having known.”^{YLT}

Here again, the response of the masters is not to be perfunctory – a mere discipline. As with everything done unto the Lord, the *“heart, soul, mind, and strength”* are to be employed. **Masters are not to conduct themselves toward their servants within the framework of a law, but within the consciousness of God Himself.**

YOU HAVE A MASTER IN HEAVEN

“... that ye also have a Master in heaven.”

Everyone in the body of Christ is subject to someone else – as well as to one another (1 Pet 5:4). The master, however, is to be keenly aware that he also has *“a Master in heaven”* – and *“the heavens do rule”* (Dan 4:26).

There is a principle extant in the kingdom of God of which we are to be mindful. **The “Master in heaven”**

deals with us in accordance with the manner in which we have dealt with others. A point is made of this in Scripture.

- ✦ *“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”* (Mat 6:14-15).
- ✦ *“With the merciful thou wilt show*

and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2 Cor 9:6).

- ✦ *“Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you”* (2 Thess 1:6).
- ✦ *“For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment”* (James 2:13).

In his just and equal dealings with his servants, the master is ensuring the Lord will, in the day of judgment, be considerate of him also.

thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright” (Psa 18:25).

- ✦ *“With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward”* (Psa 18:26).
- ✦ *“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again”* (Mat 7:2).
- ✦ *“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again”* (Luke 6:38).
- ✦ *“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly;*

- ✦ *“Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double”* (Rev 18:6).

In his just and equal dealings with his servants, the master is ensuring the Lord will, in the day of judgment, be considerate of him also.

This principle, of course, applies to every member of the body of Christ. It is a worthy thing to remember, enabling us to reap a harvest of kindness in the day when we stand before the Lord. **There is a sense in which we can shape the manner in which God deals with us.** All of the grace and Divine resources required to accomplish this are found in Christ Jesus – everything pertaining to life and godliness!

CONCLUSION

Thus we have dealt with a very practical aspect of our salvation – what some might call “every day life.” However, it is imperative that we see this text correctly. It is infinitely more than a mere outline of how we are supposed to live. There is certainly nothing wrong with

that view from an initial viewpoint, or when we are first *“added to the church.”* The novice may not be able to see much more than this in the beginning of his life. **However, at some point, the child of God must advance to a higher view of things, else life will soon become**

tedious and tasteless, and he will revert to vain living. A lack of vision leads to perishing – only when we can see, walking in the light, will we “not stumble.”

The Spirit has testified to us of

the manner in which “*the new man*” reacts to the various positions and responsibilities of life in this world. This is the way in which Divine resources are appropriated for, what we might call, routine or ordinary life. This is not to demean this aspect of our live, but to see it from a proper perspective.

The relationships that have been mentioned – wives, husbands, children, fathers, servants, and masters – are all temporary. They pertain only to this life and this world. They cannot transfer into the world to come. For that very reason, they cannot

become our primary focus, or the main things in our lives.

Notwithstanding this condition, neither can this part of our life be neglected or treated with contempt. Our faith must be brought to bear upon these relationships, otherwise they will all be in vain. Faith cannot be divorced from any part of our lives, however complex they may appear to be. At no point can we live independently of reliance upon the Lord. In every word and deed, we must “*put off the old man,*” and “*put on the new man.*”

In every human relationship, we must “*walk by faith, and not by sight.*”

Living “*soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*” (Tit 2:12), provides a context in which the Lord can and will work. Whether viewed by heavenly personalities, or the saints who are upon the earth, “*the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace*” (James 3:18). However, where anarchy and a lack of submission are present and inconsideration reigns, the hand of the Lord will not be present for good. This may be a difficult lesson for some to learn, but a due consideration of it will provide an explanation for many things that are otherwise most difficult to understand.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 4/2/2004. In this session, we will be covering verses 2-4 of the fourth chapter. The title of our lesson is, “**PARTICIPATION IN PRAYER.**” Prayer is more than simply talking to God. It is an area in which continuance is imperative. There is also the matter of watching in prayer, being alert and quick to give thanksgiving. Prayer is the environment in which the preaching of the Gospel is made more effective, and where inroads can be made into difficult areas. Here is a place where we can increase our fellowship with Christ. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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