

# COLOSSIANS BIBLE STUDY

Colossians 3:18 - 4:18

Lesson #18

## Introduction

Last week it was our intention to cover verses 14 through 17, but as sometimes happens, we ended up spending all of our time on a single verse. So we'll incorporate verses 15 through 17 into our lesson today and then we'll continue on with verse 18 through the end of the chapter. So now let's read those verses and continue our study:

*14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*

Col 3:14-17 (NASB)

As I said, last week we spent the entire time studying verse 14 and the significance of love in the overall plan of God. We discussed that it was both the initiator and the end product of God's creation. We saw that love is indeed the perfect bond of unity, as verse 14 declares. And it's love, not force, that God chose to use to bind together for eternity His final kingdom. That binding force of love, though yet un-perfected while here on earth, nevertheless binds together the body of Christ, and rules the hearts of all those whom God has regenerated.

And this is why verse 15 goes on and says to let the peace of Christ rule (literally, arbitrate) in our hearts, to which indeed we were called in one body, (one spiritual entity), and then goes on to tell us to be thankful to God for this gift. To nurture this gift and let it dwell within us richly. The words of Christ both teach us, and encourage us, and the natural result is that we display our gratitude through teaching and admonishing one another, and offering psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to the Lord, with an attitude of thankfulness in our hearts. Then verse 17 kind of summarizes this by saying whatever you do, either in words or deeds, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.

To do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, is another way of saying, to do everything in the same manner and in conformity to the teachings and actions of Jesus himself. God the Father said that He was well pleased with his Son. Therefore, we can take this as a word from God that conforming ourselves, in words and in deeds, to Jesus himself will be pleasing to God the Father. And this is how verse 17 concludes, that emulating Jesus, that is, doing everything in His name, is the means we've been given to demonstrate our thankfulness to God the Father. God the Father is pleased with his Son Jesus, and therefore it 's through our emulation of his Son Jesus that we're made able to demonstrate our thankfulness to God. Our only available means to demonstrate our thankfulness to Him is through our emulation of the perfect obedience of his Son Jesus. It's only through Jesus that mankind has any means whatsoever to be pleasing to God.

In our discussion of love last week, in verse 14, we discussed that theology and knowledge of God had a purpose that extends well beyond just the knowledge itself. We concluded that God has revealed himself to mankind so that mankind might know who God is, what he likes and what he wants, what pleases him and what displeases him, and this knowledge both regulates our actions and defines for us the nature and character of God himself. But even beyond this it provides the foundation for mankind to love their God for who and what He is, in spirit and in truth.

And this is the same principle we have here starting at verse 18 and continuing to the end of the chapter. We've seen that our love for God has a visible means of demonstration in our daily lives and attitudes. If our love of God is true then our passion will be to please him through our voluntary observance of these things which he teaches us. Authentic love doesn't try to explain away, or get around, doing the things that are pleasing to the one we love. If we say we love God, but then, when we're confronted with his word, we're upset or offended, and immediately seek to change it or get around it, then obviously something is wrong with our love.

It seems that there are many who believe that they can actually and truly love God and yet, at the very same time, dislike or even despise the things that He says. However, since what God says displays his very nature and essence then

in practicality it's not possible to love God and despise what He says and who He is. That's kind of like the comical statement that we love humanity, it's just people that we can't stand. There is no such thing as loving God and disliking the things that He teaches, this is a myth. In fact, it's precisely because we do know the things God teaches, and have come to love them ourselves, that we love the God who establishes and teaches them. We love Him **because** of Who He is and what He says, not in spite of it. And this now leads perfectly into the next set of passages which were calling:

### **Personal Relationships**

*18 Wives, be submissive to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*

*19 Husbands, love your wives and don't become bitter against them.*

*20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing in the Lord.*

*21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so they won't become discouraged.*

*22 Slaves, obey your human masters in everything; don't work only while being watched, in order to please men, but [work] wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord.*

*23 Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord—you serve the Lord Christ. 25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong he has done, and there is no favoritism.*

*1 Masters, supply your slaves with what is right and fair, since you know that you too have a Master in heaven.*

Col 3:18 - 4:1 (HCSB)

Now we begin to move from general principles of godliness to actual specifics. And those specifics are directed toward personal relationships. There could hardly be a more telling area of the human heart than how he deals with others in his day-to-day relationships. Humanity has long mastered the art of deception and political correctness regarding the things we say. We know how to say exactly what we need to say to be perceived the way we wish to be perceived, regardless of whether that's truly how we feel. If men always spoke completely truthfully, then our speech would be a reliable tool to assess the conditions of our heart. But we know this isn't the case. We know exactly what we can say and what we can't say in any specific situation, and we practice that art every day.

Do you remember a certain parable that Jesus told about a father who had two sons who he asked to go out into the field and work? Do you remember what their answers were? The first one said yes father I'll go, but then he never actually went. The second one said no I'm not going to go, but then he felt bad and went out and worked. The parable then asks the question, which one of these actually did the will of his father? The point of this parable was that in the final analysis it isn't what we say, but what we do, that reveals our true character. And such it is with personal relationships.

Words are a dime a dozen, and you can find somebody that'll tell you anything you want to hear, and you'll encounter multitudes who'll tell you whatever they think you want to hear to gain your favor. But in the final analysis, it's man's actions that judge him not his words. And unless our actions are in conformity to the word of God, then our words were simply a well rehearsed deception. So what does the word of God say about personal relationships? Let's walk through these verses one at a time and see what scripture has to say:

First in the list; wives, be submissive to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Notice it doesn't say as is fitting in contemporary culture. It says as is fitting in the Lord. A godly woman isn't submissive to her husband because it's the cultural norm, but because it's fitting in the Lord. The institution of marriage was designed by God, and He established the parameters within which it functions. It wasn't designed to be questioned, it was designed to be practiced. A godly woman is submissive to her husband not just because she loves and honors him, but much more, because she loves and honors her Lord, and seeks to please Him by her actions. Unbelievers will never understand this and they'll never agree with it, so trying to convince them is futile. But again, convincing unbelievers isn't the point, pleasing the Lord through compliance to His commands is the objective.

Second in the list, husbands, love your wives and don't become bitter against them. Everything that we said about the motivations that drive the behaviors of the wife, apply equally to the husbands. Husbands have been entrusted with a stewardship over their households, and they've been told to administer that stewardship from a foundation of love and affection. As simple as these words seem to be, if both the husband and the wife truly comprehend the wisdom of this simple teaching then the marriage relationship will profit greatly.

We all know that men and women have fundamental differences in their thinking, and their priorities, and their appreciations. And these two verses give us an insight into the very heart of those differences. At the heart of everything, a woman wants her husband to love her and to demonstrate that love with both his words and his actions. There might be vast differences of opinion between the two of them in countless other things, but if the woman feels loved and needed she can usually deal with all the countless petty differences.

Men on the other hand hold a higher regard for respect. Of course they want their wives to love them, but built into the very character and nature of man, is the need to be respected and taken seriously. If men will understand that their wives always need to feel loved and appreciated, and women will understand that their husbands need to feel respected and trusted, then almost all serious conflict can be avoided. I'm not saying all disagreements will cease, I'm saying that all disagreements can be amicably resolved, and not grow into conflicts, if each party understands and observes the deep underlying motivations of the other. Husbands love your wives, don't be bitter against them and treat them harshly. Wives remember that your husbands must feel respected by you, or they won't be able to demonstrate the love that you want back from them. If a husband and wife knows this truth, they can get through every situation they'll ever encounter in their entire married life. (Add lib a little here if desired)

Now we move on to children; who are told to obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing in the Lord. Now we're seeing a continuing pattern. What pattern is that? That this is pleasing in the Lord. Again our personal relationships certainly are pleasing one to another, but at their root they are pleasing to the Lord. Certainly children obey their parents because they love them and respect them, but even more because it's pleasing to the Lord. As a logical extension of this command, the next one says to the fathers not to exasperate their children, so they won't be discouraged.

Those of us who are parents must remember that our children are children. It's very easy to project expectations upon our children that are unrealistic. But it's also just as common to project no expectations, which is just as bad or worse. So, parents, remember that your children are indeed children, and don't place burdens on them that are not realistic, but at the same time you've been entrusted with their stewardship, to train them in the ways of the Lord, and teaching them discipline and obedience is a key element of your responsibility in their training.

I really wasn't going to go into this particular point any further than this, but there's just a few more things I simply have to add. I've often said that being a parent can be described as an exercise in balance. The two primary ingredients that a parent has to work with are love, and discipline. Both applied in appropriate proportions. Neither will work without the other. All love and no discipline will inevitably produce a selfish, self-centered brat with no concern for others. And all discipline and no love will exasperate the child and ultimately produce anger and hostility. It takes both, love cannot abandon discipline, and discipline must be administered by a parent who loves their child.

It's all too common to see both of these abused under the name of love. Love is a term that's all too often used to mask the true feelings either of apathy, or cowardice. If the parent doesn't truly love the child and care for their ultimate welfare then they may simply choose to avoid the uncomfortable practice of any discipline, and call it love. Or sometimes it's just plain cowardice on the part of parents to confront their children and deal with their behaviors. And again this is redefined as love. Then on the other side of that coin are those who don't really love their children, or care particularly about their welfare, and seek to control them solely through intimidation. This might work okay as long as the children are small, but it won't work in the long run and will seriously damage the child. A child that knows they're loved accepts discipline for what it is, and the discipline serves the purpose for which it was intended, which is instruction in righteousness. Now that's all I want to say on this subject.

Now, in verse 22, we're moving from the very close relationships of the family into the extended relationships of the workplace and the community. This next verse says; slaves, obey your human masters in everything; don't work only while you're being watched, in order to please men, but rather work wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. This is an interesting verse, not just because of what it says, but also because of what it doesn't say. This verse says absolutely nothing regarding the merits or the justice of slavery as an institution. Slavery at that time was a fact of life, and if one found themselves to be a slave, and also a child of God, then there was a code of conduct for that situation.

What a great place this would have been for Paul to have taken a stand on the social injustices of the day. And certainly social injustices there were, but the Scriptures weren't written to be a commentary on social injustices, but a guide unto righteousness for the children of God. I could certainly say a great deal more on this subject, but that will have to wait for another time, because it isn't the point of this section of Scriptures. To get back on point, this verse says that if one person is a slave to another, then he's to give them a good and honest day's work, as if he were employed directly for the Lord himself. Because in the final analysis it is the Lord who will reward him for his faithfulness, or lack thereof.

In verse 23 it continues this theme by saying; whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as if it were something done for the Lord and not for men, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord - In actuality, you serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Not everybody gets to be the king. Not everybody gets to be the master. There has to be some subjects and there has to be some slaves, but the Lord evaluates each one based on their faithfulness to the position they were placed in. If you get the opportunity, and you can improve your position, then by all means do so, but if you can't then don't fret about it but serve wherever you are with enthusiasm and diligence.

There is absolutely nothing inherently beneficial in being a king or being a master while here on earth unless one serves that position in a godly manner. The Scriptures teach us that a godly slave will be rewarded for his faithfulness where kings and masters might be condemned. So whether you're the king, or the master, or the slave, you will eventually stand before the judgment of Christ and be evaluated for your faithfulness to God.

And there is no favoritism there, only an honest and righteous evaluation. A slave on earth has every bit as much opportunity of reward, in the kingdom of God, as any king or any master. So truly as the verse says, in the final analysis, we all serve the Lord, and there is no favoritism whatsoever in His eyes as to what our earthly position was. If you find yourself a master here on earth remember that you yourself also have a master in heaven, to whom you will answer and give an account, and you cannot expect any favoritism in His eyes.

Now we've just been taught a lesson in human relationships, but human relationships have their basis in divine godly principles. Human relationships mirror and foreshadow the ultimate divine relationships. These teachings go beyond earthly boundaries, they are designed to demonstrate to us the ultimate relationship of the Father, the Son, and the children of God. Why was a wife made submissive to her husband, because the bride of Christ will be submissive to Him.

There is little benefit if we only see the earthly application, as beneficial as it may be. The husband-wife relationship was designed by God to be a foretaste, a shadow, of the coming betrothal of Christ with his bride. (Rev19) And what the bride is taught to be while here on earth, is what the church is eventually meant to be to her Christ. As children are taught to obey their father because this is pleasing to him, so all of the children of God are taught to obey God because it pleases Him when we do so. Again, it would be a tragedy to simply think these verses are about earthly human relationships, and not see the real point behind them, which is a preview of our intended eternal relationship in the kingdom of God.

I can't tell you how many times I've heard preachers and teachers insist that the whole purpose of God is to mold humanity into these principles so that mankind learns to live on earth by a certain set of rules. While this isn't entirely wrong, it tragically misses the whole point. God isn't trying to bring this current age into submission, He's fashioning a remnant **from** this current age to be made suitable for His eventual eternal kingdom. He's going to terminate this present age and creation with a fiery destruction, and bring about a whole new creation, wherein His chosen, who have learned from His instruction, and been conformed to the image of Christ, will abide with Him forever.

Therefore, let us certainly strive to put these principles into action now in our daily lives as children of God, but by all means let's not miss the real point of doing this, which is to teach us, and to shape us, into a suitable loving mate for our Lord, and eternal obedient worshipers of our God. There is a point and purpose to the Scriptures that vastly exceeds the earthly realm, and rightly do the Scriptures tell us that heaven and earth will pass away, but the word of God endures forever. The principles that we learn, and put into practice, while we're here on earth, are intended to be a learning and preparation process for those who've been chosen by God to be His forever.

### Verses 2-6:

*2 Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the message, to speak the mystery of the Messiah—for which I am in prison— 4 so that I may reveal it as I am required to speak. 5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the time. 6 Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.* Col 4:2-6 (HCSB)

Verse two says to devote ourselves to prayer. Which simply means to make prayer a natural part of our life. To make prayer like breathing, something that just happens because it's part of our nature. God built breathing into our genetic structure, so it comes natural, but He intentionally made prayer and affection an action of our conscious decision. Why did He do this? Why didn't He make prayer and affection just like breathing? The answer to this is obvious isn't it? God didn't tell us He was jealous of our breathing, He told us he was jealous of our love, and our affection, and our attention, and these are only valuable when they're given intentionally and by free choice.

Therefore devoting ourselves to prayer is something we learn to do intentionally and by free choice, driven by affection and love of God. We discipline ourselves to incorporate our affections for our Savior into everything we say and think and do, always mindful and giving thanks to Him for everything. Our obedience to God is a visible demonstration of our reverence and respect for God, and our prayers to God are a visible demonstration of our loving affection for Him. It is through these two means, obedience and prayer, that mankind relates to our Savior and our God until such time as we're brought into His physical presence. And the Scriptures tell us that our Lord is jealous for these things right now and they should be the desires of our hearts as well when we understand that these are His gifts to us to build and sustain an eternal relationship.

The Almighty sovereign God of creation designed a creature to accompany His Son and to worship Him in a relationship built on love. The One we love should always be on our mind. But devoting ourselves to prayer doesn't mean an endless stream of gimme gimme gimme, it means sharing our hearts and our thoughts with the One we love all day long in everything we do. It simply means talking to Him, keeping Him at the forefront of our attention, and incorporating Him into every aspect of our lives. This is devoting ourselves to prayer, and it should become as natural to us as breathing.

Then in verse three Paul solicits their prayers on behalf of himself and his companions, that God would continue to providentially open up doors, meaning opportunities, to continue preaching the gospel, even though he was in prison now for doing that. Paul also acknowledges in that verse that as a chosen apostle of Jesus Christ he was required to preach that message regardless of the consequences, therefore he asks for their prayers to God on his behalf for the courage and commitment to do so.

In verse five Paul tells the Colossians to walk in wisdom toward outsiders, in other words to behave and conduct themselves wisely in their dealings with unbelievers. He tells them that their speech with these people should be gracious, and uses the metaphor, seasoned with salt, which simply means presented in a tone that is intended to be one of concern rather than one of contention. Now obviously the gospel won't, and isn't, always received amicably, but we are instructed to make every effort to present it in that manner. But, don't for one second think that Paul's telling us to water it down, that's not what we're being told. The gospel at its heart, is either great news, or horrible news. It's great news to those who receive it, and it's horrible news to those who reject, and it must always be presented in this manner.

When someone hears the gospel presented correctly, and compassionately, that person knows that they've just been told that they are in great peril, and the only way out of that peril is the salvation afforded through faith in Jesus Christ. Now obviously one can present this truth with words that sound like a club beating the hearers on the head, or one can present this truth with words that are like a life preserver to a drowning man, and this is what is meant by gracious and seasoned with salt. It's talking about the attitude of the presentation, not the content of it.

The message itself must remain completely intact, or it isn't the gospel message. We must never let these words of Paul to be gracious in our presentation, be interpreted to mean that we are to soften, or eliminate portions of the message so that it will be more tolerable. The gospel message is that every human being is a sinner in the eyes of God and is already condemned to destruction in the lake of fire, called hell, unless they believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior; and all that, that belief encompasses. (Regeneration, Repentance, Obedience, Sanctification, Transformation)

There is no other gospel. There is no softer gospel. There is no salvation in half the gospel. There are no alternative gospels or extenuating circumstances, there is only the whole gospel of God, which is the good news that He has sent His Son to pay the price of our sins with His own life's blood, and to establish the righteous requirements of heaven for all of those who believe in Him. He is the resurrection and the life for all who believe. Apart from Him, there is no other God and no other Savior. To Him alone be the glory forever and ever, amen.

### **Conclusion:**

At this point Paul begins to bring his letter to a close. He mentions various brothers and sisters by name, and personally offers encouragement to them to continue in the faith. He testifies concerning the faithfulness and conscientious efforts of many of the brothers, and also acknowledges one of the sisters, who has opened up her house to be used for the church as a meeting place. He encourages the elder (Pastor) there to pay close attention to the ministry that he's received in the Lord, so as to accomplish it as he should.

Then his closing statement is a reminder to all of them not to forget that he himself is in prison for doing all the things that he's been telling them to do in his letters, and asks them to remember him in their prayers. What was actually in Paul's mind when he closed with this last sentence is known only to him and to God, but it demonstrates that he was willing to personally suffer on behalf of the gospel that he preaches, so if it happens to them also, then they'll have him as an example of faithfulness to encouragement them to likewise remain faithful to the end.

As did our Lord and Savior, who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation; because by Him everything was created, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him.

He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together. He is also the head of that spiritual body called the church; He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He might come to have first place in everything. For God was pleased to have all His own fullness dwell in his Son Jesus, and through Him to reconcile everything to Himself by making peace through the blood of His cross — whether things on earth or things in heaven. Col 1:15-20 (HCSB)

All things by His grace, all things for His glory.

Amen.

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