

(Colossians 3:17-4:1 ESV)

⤴ Roadmap:

- Col. 1 – Greeting; Who Jesus Is
- Col. 2A: 1-15 – What Do I Believe? Philosophy.
- Col. 2B: 16-23 – Who Do I Obey? Heavenly Authority.
- Col. 3A:1-11 – How Do I Live? Discipleship, obedience.
- Col. 3B:12-17 – How Do I Live? Discipleship, obedience.
- Col. 3C:17-4:1 – Who Do I Obey? Earthly Authority

⤴ Remember that Paul has already discussed authority at the end of chapter 2, and now he returns to it again in chapter 3. It's very important that we realize what has happened in the earlier parts of chapter 3: Paul has shown us how we need to change, what we put off, and what we put on. Why didn't Paul give these commands in chapter 2? Because we needed to become different people before we could hear and obey them rightly. Only people who have put on Christ can possibly obey the commands we see in today's text. But by God's grace, we died with Christ, and have been raised as new people, ready to live resurrection-style lives. Now we are ready to understand what Christ's supreme authority means for our earthly relationships. We looked last week at the virtues that should characterize our lives, and now we see why we need those virtues: because all of our lives exist in a web of relationships that require compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, and forgiveness.

⤴ Summary of the Text: **Since you've been raised with Christ, all your relationships need to take on a resurrected character.**

⤴ And so Paul gives us three pairs of relationships, rethought in light of the new God/man relationship. Now that you've been raised with Christ (3:1) and since you've put on Christ (3:12-17), here are the three relationships, governed by six commands to help you live a resurrected life:

○ Resurrected Relationships:

- Wives/Husbands
 - ⤴ Wives, submit
 - ⤴ Husbands, love
- Children/parents
 - ⤴ children, obey
 - ⤴ fathers, don't provoke
- Employees/Bosses
 - ⤴ employees, obey in everything sincerely
 - ⤴ bosses, be just and fair

○ Today, we'll look at the first set, husbands and wives. What does God tell wives who have been raised with Christ to do?

⤴ ***Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord***

- What is submission?
 - **Biblical submission involves recognizing and gladly yielding to legitimate authority.** The Bible points us to the example of Sarah, who called her husband Abraham “lord”. In this example, the recognition of authority stands for both recognizing and yielding. It's not as if Sarah said the word “lord”, and then did whatever she wanted. Sarah recognized that God had placed

Abraham in authority over her, and followed his leadership because of it. Notice that the *recognition* of authority means recognizing that **women don't submit to men**. The Bible never teaches that women submit to men. One woman, a wife, submits to one man, her husband. Wives, **do not submit** to anyone that God has not placed in authority over you.

- I've used the idea of *yielding* where the term *obedience* might be more common, because I think it's possible to obey, and not submit. I'm not even talking about obeying outwardly while having a bad attitude inwardly. That's not true submission either, but what I'm getting at is that **submission only happens when two wills are at odds**, or have different ideas of what to do. Husbands, your wife will always obey you, with a cheerful spirit, if you only tell her to do what she already wants to do. True submission means allowing the will of another to displace your own will, putting your will “under” his.
- Selfish husbands have a long history of excitedly grabbing for this truth, and using it as a club to beat their wives with. The selfish husband uses this truth to create a home designed to meet his every need, which lasts only until his wife becomes bitter. I'll say more about that in a minute.
- A godly husband, however, listens to the command given to his wife, and falls to his knees in desperation, because he realizes that he doesn't know how to lead a woman, much less a family. Authority means that every time your wife says: “So what should we do?” The husband cannot answer, “I don't know. What do you want to do?” This doesn't mean that he does all the thinking, but it does mean that he cannot let his wife lead the home, and rob her of the joy of submission. A godly husband will not use this truth to crush his wife; *he will be crushed* by the weight of this responsibility, and run hard to the cross, submitting himself to Christ.
- Why should wives submit? **Because it is fitting in the Lord.** (v. 18) Ultimately, submission is rooted in the authority of Christ. Wives submit to their husbands because this is the way Christ has ordered the world, and Christ tells wives to submit. Who put Him in charge? Well, that's what chapter 2 taught us – God put Christ in charge when He conquered sin and death and all the powers and authorities under heaven. When you conquer sin and death and the powers, then you can talk to God with your ideas of how the world should work.
 - Wives, how do you feel about that? What is your inner response? Do you bristle, and start thinking of everything that submission doesn't mean? Are you looking for loopholes, or are you thrilled? Are you excited to know that God has made a wonderful way for you to find fulfillment and joy?
 - If you struggle with the idea of submission (and many godly women do – they submit, because they are godly, but it is a struggle. They are fighting the good fight of aligning their heart with their head, and God is pleased. Don't be afraid to acknowledge your struggles. Be afraid of outwardly conforming and inwardly letting resentment build like pressure in a balloon until you

love her. So that's affection.

- **Security is love directed outwardly on behalf of your wife, the tough part of love.**
 - ▲ Of course, the primary thing a wife needs protection from is her husband. **Husbands, your sin is the greatest danger your wife will face**, outside her own heart. You threaten her in two ways: through abuse of authority, and through abdication of authority.
 - ▲ *Abuse of authority* comes in many forms:
 - **Physical abuse** occurs when you touch your wife in sinful ways. And this physical abuse should be utterly unthinkable in light of the resurrection – you died to that world. Don't live in it any longer!
 - **Emotional abuse** occurs when you take the affection you ought to be giving your wife, and give it to someone or something else. When the boat, or sports, or tv, or whatever gets more attention that she does, you are being harsh with her, even if you don't say anything unkind. When you allow yourself to be tempted by other women, whether in real relationships or through the poison of pornography, you are doing horrible things to her heart, and you need to protect her by making her feel safe in the knowledge that your love belongs to her alone.
 - **Spiritual abuse** happens when you require of your wife things that God doesn't require of her, or when you ask her to submit to you when you are being foolish, proud, or selfish instead of submitting yourself to God.
 - So love your wife by protecting her from these types of abuse.
 - ▲ *Abdication of authority* is the opposite:
 - **You abdicate physically** when you allow anyone else to touch your wife in sinful ways, or when you withhold from her the touch you are obligated to give her.
 - **You abdicate emotionally** when you do not invest in her emotional life. If you are withdrawn and passive, and just not mentally present when you are home, you are abdicating emotionally. If you do not know why she is upset, you are abdicating emotionally. Weeping with those who weep, and rejoicing with those who rejoice is a way of loving them, and if you don't understand and share in her joys and sorrows, you are not loving your wife.
 - **You abdicate spiritually** when you do not take leadership in the spiritual life of your home, especially neglecting your sacred duty to wash your wife with the water of the Word. If your wife doesn't know how you are washing her with the Word, you aren't washing her with the Word. So ask your wives – how am I washing you with the Word? And don't think that taking her to Church fulfills your duty. Putting someone in a room where there is water is not the same thing as washing them. So get a clue, and get a plan. Love your wife!
- ▲ So these are the duties of wives and husbands. Realize that these commands are given in pairs, because they reinforce one another. Wives, how much easier is it to recognize and obey authority when you know that authority is committed to laying down his life for your good?

Husbands, how wonderful is it to love a wife who will gladly follow you, support you, and submit to you because she is absolutely committed to obeying Christ? **Submission and love are designed to match up like peanut butter and jelly, or hot days and ice cream.**

- ♣ But **what if you've failed**, as we all have to some degree or other? What if you as a wife don't submit, or submit outwardly while growing a giant bitterness tree in your heart? What if you as a husband haven't loved or protected your wife, and instead you are the one she needs to be protected from?
 - God's answer is always the same: **repent, and believe the gospel**. God is in the business of restoring relationships. That's what He does: He makes peace through the blood of the cross. Christ died because you are a lousy husband, and an awful wife. But He rose in victory to overcome your failures, and enable you to live a new life. With the command of God comes the enabling power of God, and on this day above all others we celebrate the mighty gift of a transforming Holy Spirit, who lives within us and gives us the power to love and to submit! **So if you are broken by your sin and failure, repent, and believe the gospel. Jesus is willing and able to resurrect your relationship by the power of the Holy Spirit.**
- ♣ Make no mistake; you can't use failure on the other side of your relationship to justify your disobedience. It is the Lord Christ you are serving, and so it doesn't ultimately matter whether or not your counterpart is doing his or her job. Jesus promises that He will be the one to reward you (v. 24), so work for His rewards. But ordinarily, when two people living resurrected lives are both submitting to Christ, their relationship results in mutual blessing. **The first fruits of obedient relationships are the relationships themselves.** Obey God, and have a wonderful marriage. Submit to Christ by submitting to your husband, and have a great relationship with your husband. Love Christ by loving your wife, and there is nothing better you could possibly do for your wife.
- ♣ But your earthly relationships are only the first fruits: **realize that marriage is preparing you for a greater reward, an eternal inheritance.** Your marriage is a picture of how Christ relates to His Church. The reason you have a wife is to give her the opportunity to practice submission, and know God better. The reason you have a husband is to enable him to learn self-giving love, so that he will know God better. Your marriage is preparing you for life in the heavenly kingdom, so submit to Christ, and be welcomed eternally into joyful and glad fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, forever.
 - *In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.*