

99-02-19b Colossians

We resume our study now in Colossians chapter 3 verse 18. Wives submit to your own husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

Children obey your parents in all things for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged. From a structural point of view you can see that these statements have a parallel type of structure.

There is a description of, rather than just leaving the plain old sentence out there, wives submit to your own husbands. He talks about the fact that this is fitting in the Lord. He tells the husbands not only to love their wives but he says do not be bitter toward them.

He tells children that their obedience to their parents in all things is well pleasing to the Lord. He talks to the fathers saying do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged. So you have an injunction and then some sort of a descriptive or amplifying phrase in each one of these.

And then we move in verse 22 to bond servants which is by far the most developed section in this part. But you remember what we talked about in the first session that we are getting down to the point of actual application. A lot of the things that Paul said earlier in this letter are general.

Be meek, be humble, put on love that is the bond of perfection and set your minds on things above. These are all kind of generalities that don't really get down to specifics. Not to take anything away from those injunctions but it doesn't get right down into a specific situation.

These are principles that can apply in a broad range of situations. It's our challenge, it's our part to figure out how do you put off those five vices and put to death those other five vices and put on the five virtues. But that's all still in kind of a general exhortation type of vein.

But now this is very specific and it's as close to home as you can get. It's within the home and after the inward transformation has been sought after and that's starting to take place. The first place that it's going to have its outward effect is going to be closest to you, your immediate periphery.

And there is no more immediate periphery for someone who's married than with their spouse. So the first two injunctions here are to husbands and wives. Interestingly, the first one goes to the wife, not the husband.

And I think it will become clear why that is as we go forward. The verb here is *hupotasso*, H-U-P-O-T-A-S-S-O. And it literally means, *tasso* is from the same word group as *status*.

We get an English *stasis*. It has the idea of standing and *hupo* means under. So to stand under has the idea of putting or placing.

Tasso literally means to put a place. To place under, to stand under, to subordinate something in the active voice. The idea, the idea frame of reference for this verb is order.

There is an order. Something belongs below something else. You get this when you diagram sentences or when you make a list of things.

Our girls have been learning how to alphabetize. And there is an order. Certain things go in certain places.

And that's the root idea of Hupotasso. You place one thing under another thing. And it has the basic idea of subordination.

However, this is not the active voice of Hupotasso. This is the middle voice. You have three voices in Greek.

The active voice, you typically have a subject of verb and a direct object. I hit the ball. That's an active voice.

A passive voice, I was hit by the ball. In Greek you have a third thing that we don't really have a good equivalent for in English, which is the middle voice. The middle voice has various uses.

It typically has a reflexive force. I do something to myself or I cause myself to do something. And this is the voice that we have here.

This is the middle voice of Hupotasso, and so it means to subject oneself, to place oneself under the authority of another. Now, this may not strike you as a blinding or a brilliant insight, but think about this for a moment. Paul does not say, Husbands, and then use Hupotasso in the active voice, and say, Husbands, bring your wives into subjection, for this is right.

Or, Husbands, subject your wives as is fitting in the Lord. Who is doing the action here? The husband is never told to make the wife submit. Never.

The wife is commanded to submit herself. It's the middle voice, and I know that Mike's idea of we will compel you falls out here, unfortunately. But this is in keeping.

You remember the foundation we laid in the last lesson about inward transformation. This is something that is a duty. It's an opportunity.

It is a part of Christian calling for each of us to find our place, and none of us are at the top of the pyramid, because God the Father is at the top of the pyramid. The Lord Jesus Christ has Hupotassoed himself to the Father, and when you think about this, and this verb is used of Jesus Christ being submissive to the will of the Father. The very same verb, very same voice.

So this puts away all of these funny ideas about lesser dignity, or somehow devaluing or

diminishing a wife who is submissive, because this is the very same action that Jesus Christ, and if you think that a wife submitting to the husband diminishes her, you have to say that Christ submitting to the Father somehow diminishes him, and that's blasphemy. Jesus Christ is not diminished. In fact the definition, the school book theological definition of the hypostatic union is that Jesus Christ is absolute divinity and true humanity undiminished.

He is undiminished deity and true humanity and one person forever. That's a part of the definition. He is undiminished by his submission.

The wife is not diminished in any way. Not her dignity, not her worth. If anything, her value is enhanced because in the eyes of God she has begun to seize and lay hold of that potential that we talked about, the potential that Jesus Christ makes possible.

Right away when you start thinking about this idea, a lot of flags go up and people get defensive. Well, but what if he's abusive? What if he's not godly? What if he makes me do bad things? What if it's a bad situation? Well, what if he's just dumb? What if the husband just isn't very smart? And the only thing that keeps him from just bumping into things is the wiles and wits of his wife. And she's got to pretty much make the decisions and sort of wear the pants in the family or everything is going to just unravel.

Well, this gets back to the idea we talked about in the last lesson and we talked about it before. What is the measure? If you're measuring this earthly life by how circumstances turn out, let's say that you're shopping for a house. I can use that because none of us are shopping for a house so nobody will take this personally any more than we all should.

But let's say there's a couple shopping for a house here. There's a man and a woman. The man sees a house and it's got a great big workshop out in the back and so he loves that house.

But it's got a rotten roof, the windows aren't sealing, and it's got all kinds of other problems. But he's really sold on it because it's got a big workshop in the back. The wife is smarter and she knows that that's not going to offset all of the bad parts of this deal.

She sees a nice little cottage, it's got a garden, it's a much better house, roughly the same price. Here's the thing, and this is kind of an absurd example on purpose, but there are two things that can happen. The wife can be non-submissive and really push the issue and say, I will leave you if you buy that rotten old house with the shop in the back and be out from under God's will in so doing and succeed in getting the husband to buy the little cottage with the flowerbeds.

And you think, well, see that turned out okay. That was a good thing because circumstances have worked out well. Now we've got a nice weatherproof house and it's got the flowerbeds and we didn't make a bad bargain.

On the other hand, the wife, there's nothing wrong with offering opinion. We're supposed to

communicate and so forth. Same thing in the military.

While the decision is being made, you can offer input and so forth. But once the decision is made, you go with the decision that's made by the authority. And you may think it is wrong-headed.

You may think it is doomed to failure, that it's going to create disaster and so forth. And you've voiced all of that in the decision-making process, but the colonel or the general or the husband or whoever it is that's in authority says, this is what we're going to do. End of discussion.

Now everyone's efforts bend toward making the best possible implementation of that decision, however good or bad it may be. So let's say we do this. And the husband goes ahead and buys the rotten house with the wonderful shop in the back.

And it's a disaster. And they have all kinds of repair bills and everything else. And you say, well, now see, this isn't a very practical piece of biblical injunction here because now these people are living in a miserable squalor situation instead of a nice little neat cottage.

The measure is not which house did you end up living in. The measure is not how good of a bargain did you make. God is not going to ask you those questions.

The woman who is submissive to her husband, who voices her input, does so in love and with respect, and if the decision goes the other way, does her best to plug the leaks and make a goal of that house because that was her husband's decision, and she wants to be submissive because she's doing this as unto the Lord, she has won the battle. And the woman that wound up with the nice little cottage has lost. Because you may win that little battle, but you've lost the war.

You've lost the opportunity to honor the Lord by obedience. The measure is not how circumstances turned out. The measure is what was going on in your soul.

Did you honor the Lord? Were you obedient to the Lord? And this is what we miss. We think, well, God will bless good thinking and good decisions and God will curse bad decisions. Not always.

You look at biblical characters and you see many of them that things did not go well for them when they were doing the will of God. Read the book of Job. Job was righteous.

He was out there sacrificing, taking care of his kids, did everything right. And he underwent a terrible set of experiences because it was a part of the will of God. And Job understood, as his friends did not, that the battle was within.

And he had his little wavering moments there, but Job, you see when God renders judgment at the end of the book of Job, and he says, you men over here, you have not spoken the truth about me. My servant Job has got it right. That's a paraphrase of what God says at the end.

And the latter end of Job was greater than the beginning. And God blesses him in spades from what he had at first because Job understood that the battle was in the heart. And he maintained his faith.

He didn't curse God and die. His wife flaked out and unraveled and said, curse God and die. Because she lost all of her children and she was looking at the immediate circumstance.

We have to train our minds and our souls to think in this way. To not assume that because circumstances go bad, we must have made a wrong choice somewhere and God is no longer a blessing. The big idea of divine guidance, and we study this a little bit in our divine guidance series, is that you can tell whether or not you're in the will of God by if things are turning out well.

And if everything's kind of flowing and everything's kind of falling in place, well, this must be of God. Look how well it's all turning out. Maybe and maybe not.

Satan can make everything fall in place too. Lots of ungodly pagan people that are rich and famous and claim to be just happy as pigs in a mullah. The measure is in the heart, and that's what we have to remember.

When wives look at this injunction to submit to their husbands, they can't start focusing on, well, if I submit, look what's going to happen. Look how badly things are going to turn out. That's not the measure.

That's not the issue. The issue is, how obedient can I be to the Lord? How closely can I conform myself to the example that is set in Scripture? You go over to Peter, and Peter uses the example of Sarah and Abraham. And he says that Sarah was a model of obedience.

And she was. Abraham made some real harebrained decisions. He went to Egypt and said, she's my sister.

He went over to the other king there and said she was his sister. He wasn't always hitting on all eight cylinders, that she never left him. She never threw a fit over anything except Hagar.

And so Peter uses her as an example of obedience. Hupotasso, to submit, subject oneself. This is a mental battle for the wife.

The husband isn't told, go subject your wife. Bring her into line. Whip her into obedience.

Line her up. Straighten her out. There's no injunction in Scripture for the husband to straighten out or to force behavior on the wife.

The injunction is always to the wife. You find the same thing when you go to the parallel passage over in Ephesians chapter 5. Wives submit themselves. It doesn't say husbands, make your wife submissive.

If she's unsubmitive, there's no biblical recourse. The Bible doesn't say, and lo husbands, if your wives fail to submit themselves, then go make them. If there's a rebellious or an unsubmitive wife, it is not the husband's place to subject her to either verbally, mentally, spiritually, physically, or in any other way, try to use some sort of coercion to bring about in her soul what the word of God and the spirit of God had not and cannot do.

If God cannot bring that soul into submission, if they're not going to respond to God, they're not going to respond to a human either. Not in the genuine sense. And it isn't going to please God even if you do.

There are people that use fear and intimidation to bring people into line who will pull on the strings of insecurity or the threat of being left or of being harmed or whatever else to control and manipulate other people's behavior. That's not pleasing to God and there's not a shred of biblical support for anybody coming anywhere near that kind of control. So this is one of the things we want to notice here as we've observed the foundation in the context of what Paul is saying here.

This is something that these believers in each of these categories are to do for themselves. These Hupotasso words are in the middle. This is something you do yourself.

Wives are to submit themselves. If they fail to submit, they're accountable to God. God will deal with them.

And it would be better to let your wife go than to get into the wrong yourself because husbands have their own injunction. Before we leave verse 18 though. Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord.

The word for fitting here is akin to the word for acceptable that we saw back in chapter 1 where it said this is well pleasing to the Lord. It comes from the same word group and it has the idea of what is proper. This is proper.

This is your duty. This is your calling in the Lord. And he's referring back to what he talked about.

You're that positional truth. You're in Christ. If you're in Christ, you're a new creature.

If you're in Christ, you're putting off the old man. You're putting to death the old things. You're putting on the new man.

You're putting on those five virtues. You're forbearing. You're forgiving.

You're long-suffering. Now this doesn't extend to ridiculous lengths. And I've said before that wives are not to stay in a physically abusive relationship.

They are not to stay when they are being victims of porna in their marriage. The Bible does not tell you to die in place in a marriage relationship. But in the Lord, you do what you do as unto the

Lord.

And as long as you can hold up your head before the Lord and know that you're doing the right thing in his sight, and it's not right in his sight to be abused. It's not right to watch your children be abused. It's not right to have the covenant of your marriage trampled upon and stamped down into the mud time after time after time.

There's no biblical justification for staying when you're being abused in those ways. But in the Lord, it should be proper in the Lord. When you come before God in prayer, you should be able to bring your marriage before the Lord and your actions within the marriage and be able to hold your head up and say, I am doing my very best to follow the biblical guidance.

I am being submissive without allowing destruction, without allowing abuse, without compromising other biblical principles that balance and provide a context for this injunction. Jesus Christ submitted himself to the will of the Father, even to the point of death. John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul, the Apostle Peter, David, Moses, you look at the roster of great men of the faith in the Bible, great women of faith in the Bible, who submitted themselves to the will of God regardless of the cost.

But it was something that reflected the glory of God, and that's what we're looking at. This is proper. It's fitting in the Lord.

It's something that reflects glory on the Lord. It may take great patience. It may take great humility.

It may border on, you may feel like you're being abused or used or neglected or unappreciated or whatever. Each person is going to have to make that decision and evaluate where they stand before the Lord if there are problems in the marriage. Hopefully there are not.

And Paul assumes that this is a place where there are believers who are equally yoked together, who share a common desire to please the Lord. And that's why he moves on in verse 19 to say, Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. The word for love here is agapao.

It's the same word that Paul has used for love earlier in the chapter and earlier in the letter. As opposed to phileo, which is sort of be kind, be beneficial to them or so forth. Or the eros, E-R-O-S type of love, which is don't neglect them physically and that kind of thing.

Those words are not used here. This is agapao. This is the love that God has for the world.

This is the love that Christ expressed to us. It is self-sacrificial. It will put itself out on someone else's behalf.

It will absorb a wrong. It will suffer long. It is the love of 1 Corinthians 13.

This is the love that husbands are commanded to have for their wives. It's interesting though that both here in verse 18 and in verse 19, wives and husbands, these terms are not in the vocative. You know what the vocative is? It's an address.

If in English I say, you husbands, I'm using the vocative. But this is the nominative. This is more a statement of principle.

The husbands are to love their wives. The wives are to submit themselves. He's stating this principle.

He's not even including the second person idea of you. You people ought to be doing this. He's saying this is the way it is.

This is what's proper. This is the order that God has established. This is the design.

The husband is to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they too are to be one flesh. The wife should be submitting herself. She shouldn't have to be pressured or otherwise brought into line somehow by the husband.

And the husband ought to be expressing love. He ought to be knocking himself out on behalf of his wife and without any sort of compensation or saying, well, I'll do this for you, and then you'll do this for me, or any other sort of bargaining thing. This is something that people do because it is a part of the calling.

He says, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. And this is an unusual construction. We've had the word for bitterness in other places.

It's pikrino, P-I-K-R-A-I-N-O. And this is almost an onomopoeic word, pikrino. When you look at it, it just has the idea of something that's got a sharp center to it, like the middle of a brussel sprout.

Do not be embittered. But you hardly, in fact, nowhere else in the New Testament do we find pikrino used with the preposition pros, toward. You can be embittered by someone, but to be embittered toward.

This tells us that this is not just being bitter because of something the wife has done or failed to do. This includes any kind of bitterness, and a real common failing for husbands is to be immersed in business or vocation or whatever it may be and come home and be full of bitterness and vent that bitterness toward the wife. It may not be anything that she has said or done, or it may not be personal, but you've built up bitterness in other areas and you come home and point it at the wife.

But this is mental attitude, isn't it? Love for the wife, self-sacrificial love, godly type of love, and do not be bitter. The enemy of love is bitterness. Having stress or anxiety or worry or pressure in

other areas of life eat away at the love that ought to be there.

Maybe life is going on and you get to a midlife crisis, or maybe there is job pressure, or maybe there is family pressure, or you wanted to do one thing and you couldn't. Some guys, I used to be around guys in Lincoln, they all wanted to buy bass boats, but they weren't making enough money to buy a bass boat. It made them bitter.

I had Marines who had wives down in the shelter because they were battered. These guys were training enlisted men during the day and they just felt unfulfilled. They weren't where they wanted to be.

They wanted to be in a fleet unit and they were at a school. They wanted this, they wanted that, they wanted something, and this bitterness came up inside. Bitterness can come from a whole host of sources, but Paul specifically says, here, don't let bitterness come out toward your wife.

You shouldn't have bitterness at all, but whatever you do, don't point bitterness at your wife. That's what the preposition pros says. Don't let bitterness get out of you and head toward your wife for any reason or any circumstances.

That is the enemy of love. If you find yourself having trouble in the area of love and close relationship, look for sources of bitterness. It may be completely unrelated and you say, how can this thing over here be affecting my marriage or affecting my relationships? It will because bitterness is the acid that eats away love.

That's the idea of Pocrino. There's a lot we could say about it. I could show you lots of passages where it shows that, but the point here is, I'll just give you one passage.

You'll find it over in Ephesians 4.31. Then we move to children. Notice here it doesn't say, parents, make your children obey. Make them obedient.

This particular passage, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't make our children obey, but what is the injunction here? Think about the context of Colossians. This is a letter written to a congregation. These are older children.

These are children sitting in the congregation hearing this letter. They're not sending this down to prep school or down to the nursery. When we say children, we think, oh, six, seven, eight years old.

These are children who are old enough to understand. They've already gotten through nearly three chapters of this letter to hear this. So we're talking about young adult children.

We're talking about perhaps even adult children in this case. It says, children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Here, instead of the submission word of hupotasso that we had for the wives, we have hupakuo.

This is the word that's used for military obedience. This is a much more direct command here. This is in the imperative.

There's not a middle voice here. It doesn't say, be obedient, make yourselves obedient. This is a command.

It says, children, obey. It is specifically this word, *hupakuo*, is used in the New Testament for our submission to Christ, the obedience of the faith, obedience to the gospel, obedience to the teaching of the word of God. This is a much more direct authority response that we are to have, that children specifically are to have to their parents in all things.

Of course, these are children that are still somehow in the parents' household. You had sons back in those days that would live in the household and work with their father. You'd have a lot of Josiah and son type of enterprises, Abraham and son, Isaac and son, Jacob and sons.

The sons would be there. Well, if you're under the patriarch's roof, he's the man. He makes the decisions.

He renders the judgments. I don't care if you're in your 20s or in your 30s. If you're living there and you're under that household authority of the father, he's the man.

Obey in all things. You can't just pick some things and then rebel in others. As long as you're in a position to submit to that authority, you're to submit to that authority.

This is well-pleasing to the Lord. Here's another of those well-pleasing words. This literally means acceptable to God.

You are rest on. It's acceptable. And this is the goal.

You think about Romans 12, 1 and 2, to find out what is that good and acceptable will of God. Same word, same idea. You'll find it also in Romans 14, 18.

So what is he saying here? You think about Romans 12, offer yourself a living sacrifice, be not conformed to the world, be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you will know what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Well, for a child, here's the fulfillment of that goal. Lots of people have taken Romans 12, 1 and 2 as their life verse.

Well, here's a practical way to live it out. Where is your place in the order that God has established? Are you an employee? Are you a spouse? Are you a parent? Are you a child? Where is your place in the divine order? Find it and live it out. That is well-pleasing to the Lord.

That is the acceptable will of God. Then in verse 21 it says, Fathers, do not provoke your children. It would be nice if we could just leave that as fathers.

And it looks like it in Greek. It's pateres. But in the plural and in this context, it means parents.

It doesn't just mean fathers. And if you want documentation for this, you can look at Hebrews 11, 23 where it says that Moses' parents hid him. He didn't have many fathers.

It's in the plural. It says the pateres of Moses took care of him when he was in the bulrushes and so forth. Well, same construction here.

Hoi pateres. Parents, do not provoke your children. This is a fascinating word.

Erethizo in Greek, E-R-E-T-H-I-Z-O means to provoke. It literally means to irritate. It's only used one other place in the New Testament which is 2 Corinthians 9, 2 where Paul is talking to one church about another church and he says, I've talked about you to this other church and your example is provoking them.

And you wonder, well, is it irritating them or is it motivating them in a positive sense? It's hard to tell because in secular Greek, this word mainly meant to irritate. It's kind of fun to read through 2 Corinthians 9, the first few verses there, and see whether he's saying, you people in Achaia, your example is irritating to this other church or if it's stimulating in a positive sense. I think a good synonym in English is provoke.

Something that's provocative can be a positive thing. You can be provoked to love and good works or you can be provoked and be irritated. But it's something that stimulates.

It's something that causes a reaction is the idea. And it says, Parents, do not provoke your children. It's a good translation in the New King James here.

With the result that they become discouraged. It doesn't mean that you don't motivate them or that you don't prod them or that you don't get a reaction. But you don't want to have them become discouraged.

They need to be encouraged. They need to be built up, not torn down. And it's easy.

There are people who don't know how to handle authority. And when they become parents and they're raising their children, they abuse that authority. It's easy because you're bigger, you're smarter, you know more, you're in charge of the household.

And there are parents who provoke their children, who drive them away from the things of God, who drive them away from productive growth because they abuse their authority. And you know that you've gone too far. You know that you've over-disciplined or you've become overbearing toward a child.

When they become discouraged, it's one thing to be disciplined. It's one thing to know that you've done wrong and be chastened. God does that with us.

He discourages every son he receives. God provokes us in a positive way. But God always encourages us.

He doesn't leave us discouraged. He doesn't leave us feeling a sense of hopelessness. That's never God's intention.

And a parent should never leave a child with a sense of hopelessness. Parents should never berate their children. They should never use adjectives like stupid.

You hear this. It's a terrible thing. When parents say, Are you just stupid? And you hear all these terrible things that belittle and do serious damage to a child's outlook on life.

We can be very strict. We need to be strict. We need to ensure compliance.

We need to use the rod. The Bible says that foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but a rod of correction will drive it far from them. And it's our job that we cannot shirk to drive the foolishness out of the heart of our children, but not to the point of driving them in a bad direction.

You can do more harm than good if you're not consistent, if you're not faithful, if you're not intelligent in the exercise of that authority. Parents do not provoke your children with the result that they become discouraged. If what you're doing to your child is discouraging them instead of building them up and teaching them obedience and teaching them respect for authority and all of the positive things, you're doing something wrong.

This word for provoke, if you want to explore it further, it is used in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament in verses like Numbers 14.8, Deuteronomy 21.20, Proverbs 19.7, Proverbs 25.23. The Israelites provoked the Lord in the wilderness, and God switched over from beneficial and blessing to cursing and discipline because they provoked Him and they urged Him in a negative direction. That's kind of the idea. Then finally we have bond servants in verse 22.

Bond servants obey in all things. Notice the children in verse 20. Obey your parents in all things.

Didn't say in all things to the wife, did it? And the wife is not told to be obedient. The children and the bond servants are told to obey. Hupotasso, Hupakoua, they are in both cases.

But for the wife it's Hupotasso. She is treated much more as an equal the way Christ is equal to the Father. And yet He makes Himself submissive to the will of the Father.

Christ was obedient even to death, the death of the cross, tells us elsewhere in Scripture. But that obedience was a result of His willing self-submission to the Father. And so it's important to see the contrast here.

Wives are never told obey your husbands. They are told to submit themselves. And it's a responsibility of the wife before the Lord.

Children, however, are told to obey. They have less... They're not told to submit themselves. They're told to obey.

They're farther down the rung. They need to obey their parents. But there's always a balancing truth.

The balancing truth for submissive wives is that the husbands have to do their part and be loving. And not use them as a doormat. And not use them as a place to vent their frustrations and their bitterness.

Children are to be obedient, but parents are not to abuse their authority in that area. Servants are to be obedient, are to obey in all things their masters according to the flesh. This is their earthly masters.

Not with eye service. This is a great word in Greek. It's got the *ophthalmos* at the front of it.

The *ophthalmo* duo sort of a thing. Not with eye service as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. Once again, these outward manifestations, this is the life of a servant is the orders and the structure and the requirements of the master.

This is the life for a child when they're under the authority of their parents. That's their immediate context. Same thing with wives and husbands.

That's the closest, most immediate daily responsibility. And it has to come from within. That's the thrust of these exhortations.

Disobedience is not to be superficial. It's not to be just to put up appearances. It's supposed to be sincere and from the heart, whatever you do.

And then verse 23, this refers back to everybody. This is not just to the slaves. Verse 23, Wives, husbands, children, slaves, whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not to men.

Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance for you serve the Lord Christ. And everyone who is under authority, your authority, the way this is constructed, I can't go into all the details in Greek, but in verse 24 when he says you serve the Lord Christ, he's saying when you're observing this authority, when you're submitting yourself and you're being obedient and you're giving this genuine, sincere, from the heart obedience, you're serving Christ. Don't think of it as I'm submitting myself to my husband and he is my Lord.

I'm submitting myself to my parents and they are my Lord. I'm submitting myself to my master and he is my Lord. This submission and obedience is because Christ is the Lord and this is what he has asked.

And it doesn't matter how circumstances turn out. It matters that you've won the battle in the

heart. That's the measure.

That's the evaluation point. That's where the battle is won or lost. That's where the glory of Christ is reflected or not.

That's where Christ the Lord is served. We tend to measure service by what happens on the outside, what happens in the earth. Service to Christ, if you want to be a servant, if you want to be a person who is serving Christ, a genuine disciple, it takes place in the heart.

You serve the Lord Christ in the heart when you win the battle of submission, when you win the battle of obedience, when you put on those virtues, you're serving the Lord Christ. And if anyone is doing wrong, if you're doing your part and your authority is not reciprocating, they are venting bitterness, they are abusing their authority, they are failing, you just do your part and remember that he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done and there is no partiality. He's not going to get cut a break because he had the authority.

God is no respecter of persons. Put the justice, put the recompense, put the righting of the wrongs in God's hands. Don't give an I serve as type of obedience and then undercut or try to wreak your own justice or try to get your tit for tat or get your recompense yourself.

You're serving the Lord Christ. Jesus knows, God the Father knows what your situation is and if it means reconciling, He'll do it and you won't have to do it yourself. It's a strong lesson in putting these words into practice, putting these principles and doctrines and general statements of truth that we found in the earlier part of chapter 3. This is how it's implemented in real life and this is the attitude we have to have.

We have to keep our eyes on things above. If we have our eyes fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ seated at the right hand of the Father and we say, He's the one I'm serving. We can do these things.

If we think, well, I'm having to serve this bad authority, this unintelligent authority, this abusive authority, we're going to fail. The only way we'll be able to succeed in this is to keep our eyes on things above but it's a doable thing. The power of the word of God, the power of God the Holy Spirit, the knowledge that God is just and fair and God will never suffer the righteous to be moved, to put these things in the hands of a faithful creator and a loving Heavenly Father, we can do this.

And when we do, even if circumstances don't turn out well, we have that reward knowing, and that verse 24 is great, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. That's what we're going to pick up and look at just briefly next time as we move into chapter 4 and see what is required of masters. This is a good place for us to pause and wait until we resume again next week.

Let's close in prayer. Father, we thank you for the fact that you have established order. You have assigned us a place in your plan.

You've assigned us a standing in Jesus Christ. You've also assigned us a place in the circumstances of life. We pray that these truths will enable us to fulfill that part of our calling as unto the Lord, heartily, with sincerity, and in the power that your Word and your Spirit provides.

We know that in so doing we will fulfill everything that you are asking of us. We will reflect the glory of our Savior. And we will play our part in the grand scheme of your plan that is unfolding itself before our eyes, the eyes of the angels, the eyes of everyone who will observe now and in the age to come.

We thank you again for the privilege of being where we are, being sustained by your grace. We ask your blessing on us as we go forth and attempt to put these things into practice in our own lives. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.