

**Text:** Colossians 3:18-4:1

**Title:** House Rules, Part 2

**Truth:** Christianity guides life's most private relationships; in YOUR life too.

**Date/Location:** Sunday January 3, 2016 at FBC

## Introduction

Recall last time we touched on the responsibilities of wives and husbands.

First the Bible addresses the subordinate group, the wives, and then the leadership group, the husbands. The same pattern is followed in the next four groups of people addressed in the "house rules" section of Colossians 3 and 4 with the subordinate group first (children, servants), and then the leadership group second (fathers, masters).

All of this is in the context of a typical Christian household that has a husband and a wife as parents to one or more children, and who have one or more servants in their home.

### I. Wives: Submit

### II. Husbands: Love and Do Not Be Bitter

(See December 27, 2015 notes on these two groups). If only wives would be submissive and husbands would be loving and not bitter: our homes would be the closest thing to heaven on earth that there is!

### III. Children: Obey

- A. To obey means to 'hearken,' to hear with a good response. If you hear a knock at the door, you get up and answer it! You don't just 'hear' it, you do something about it. No starting age is given, but children can understand this command from a very young age. This message should be plainly taught to the children at home and in our Sunday school.
- B. Children are told to obey *their* parents, not *other* parents. Other adults' directions for children are ultimately channeled through the authority of the parents, so that a child has only to think about "is that OK with my parents?" before doing something. We have to be careful not to set up competing authorities in a child's life, but complementary ones. If a child is adopted or in foster care, God sees those parents as the parents.
- C. The obedience called for is comprehensive—in all things. You do not pick and choose. What about "recourse" for a bad situation? See section I. F. of last week's notes as to how the wife can seek help. This is similar for a child. If the child is told to sin he could appeal for help to the church, or if

he is sinned against (by being abused, for instance), then legal recourse is available. Obviously these are intractable situations so there is no easy solution in such cases.

- D. Obedient behavior is the single and simple instruction from God for children. When they do that, the Lord Jesus is well pleased. This is true even if you are a teenager still under your parents' authority. If dad asks you to do something, do it. If he says he doesn't like you doing something, don't do it "just because I can since I'm 18 now!" There is nothing magical about 16 or 18 or even 20 in the Bible!
- E. Furthermore, we could say this is the child's only specific responsibility *as a child*. Yes, children have other general responsibilities, such as knowing the Scriptures and believing in Christ and repenting of sin and those things that are generally applicable to all humans. But this command is the *one* that is specific to them.
- F. See the parallel in Ephesians 6:1-3. The Bible directly addresses children and adds that obedience should be in the Lord, it is right, it is essential to honor your parents (not just grudgingly obey them), and this command came first in Exodus 20:12 with a promise that it will go well with children who are obedient. This shows how important obedience is to God. There is no absolute promise that good kids will live until they are 95, but a general truth is that kids who obey good parents will have good outcomes (not getting into drugs, bad relationships, laziness, or crossing the street without looking, etc.)

#### **IV. Fathers: Do Not Provoke**

- A. Fathers specifically are addressed here because they bear the brunt of God's command. God does not address the mother as to how the house functions. God addresses the father! So, perk up your ears, dads! Obviously moms participate in the endeavor of training the children, but dads are ultimately responsible for how the house runs.
- B. Fathers are to see to it that they do not exasperate their children. The basic meaning of this is to irritate or embitter. It does not mean that the precious child never hears the word 'no'! What Paul is talking about is not *zero* irritation, but *constant* irritation with long-lasting effects. This can happen by an overbearing, or angry, or micro-managing, or insensitive, or a constantly fault-finding parent. It can happen by the under-parenting of total permissiveness or total absence!
- C. Important note: The normal state of a married man is to have children and to provide for the home so that mom can care for the children. You

do not bear children to warehouse them for 10-12 hours a day and effectively let someone else raise them! And beyond this, children need dads. If you ‘father’ a child, you need to BE THERE for the child. ‘Child support’ is a pathetic minimum for dads who have left the family. We need a much stronger societal and governmental and church stand for marriage, keeping divorce low, and keeping kids with both parents.

D. The reason fathers are to not embitter their children is that constantly irritating them will create damaged kids who are depressed, feel good-for-nothing, are disheartened, have low motivation, and the like.

E. See the parallel in Ephesians 6:4.

## **V. Servants: Obey, Do Work Heartily**

A. This is a lengthy segment of the text, taking four verses whereas every other group is given a single verse. This would be of great interest to the recipients of Paul’s letter, since there were a good number of slaves in the church. Also, a slave, Onesimus, was accompanying the letters to Colosse and Philemon, so it was somewhat of a “delicate” situation as to how Paul would handle slavery in this context.

B. Servants or slaves? Whatever precisely the definition is, a slave was the opposite of a free person (1 Cor. 7:21), who was in a different political situation, independent, and not bound to another. Therefore, it was not a highly coveted place to be a slave, but it was the place that many found themselves in, either due to war or poverty, for instance.

C. Slaves are to obey their masters according to the flesh. The master does not lord it over the slave’s spirit, but he does have charge over the body.

D. The slaves were like children in the sense that they were to obey in all things (like children). Slaves are not children, but there is a parallel.

E. The slaves’ obedience was not merely to please men. They were to have more integrity than only working hard when the boss was watching. Their obedience was to be marked by:

1. Sincerity and fear of the Lord. The slave has to acknowledge that his lot is ordained by the Lord. If he may obtain his freedom, he is more than welcome to do so (1 Cor. 7:21). But he may not be able to do so.
2. Wholeheartedness to the Lord, not to men. If you have mundane work to do, do it well! Your work should always be honorable work, not sinful work. Digging ditches is good, honest work.

F. This should be done because the Christian servant will receive the final blessings of eternal life, no matter what his earthly master does or does

not do. The slave could not be an heir in the household, but he might receive some gift from his master. The Christian servant ultimately serves the Lord, not his human master.

- G. The last verse of chapter 3 gives a general principle of punishment by God for wrongdoing by man. This applies to everyone generally, since “there is no partiality.” To the slave, it reminds him that God does not favor masters because they are “in the 1%.” But God also does not favor slaves because they are the downtrodden. Even believing servants may mess up and do things that are not appropriate for a Christian to do. In the modern context, a Christian employee may lose his job because he is not acting appropriately, not working hard, or having an attitude.
- H. Check out parallel passages in Ephesians 6:5-8, Titus 2:9 and 1 Peter 2:18.
- I. We leave until another time a discussion of what slavery looked like in ancient Greek and Roman culture. We have to deal with the text here, and we need to give it a fair hearing. However, the demise of slavery was built into Christianity. Even this household code, taken to its logical end, spelled the end of slavery because masters were to give “what is just and fair” to their servants. This ultimately includes the servants’ *freedom!*

## **VI. Masters: Be Just and Fair**

- A. To give the servants what is just and fair means to transfer something from the master to the servants. They deserve something for what they are doing. The worker is still worthy of his wages even if he is in a household servant job placement! He or she deserves proper food, shelter, clothing, and even a little spending cash to cover other needs for themselves or their families. The master is to practice very ethical and upright treatment of his servants.
- B. Why? Christian householders who have servants or slaves in their home have their own Master (capital ‘M’) in heaven. The earthly masters will be called to account by the heavenly Master. If this does not happen immediately or in this life, it will happen later. Someone is watching! Just like the slaves are not to do their work with “eye service” to please men, masters are not to do their part as if God is not watching.
- C. See the parallel in Ephesians 6:9 which includes an injunction against using threats (Acts 9:1) to motivate servants.

## **Conclusion**

Apply and actualize these for a godly home and godly life!

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