**Colossians**

**Week 4 Col 3:18 – 4:18**

As we move into the final week, we must remember all that is gone before. Paul has been presenting a way of life that results from a commitment to the risen Jesus Christ. As we saw in the last section, this is a way that is based upon a love for one another in response to the love from God. The first part of this section deals with the household. At the time of writing the Hellenistic household was one in which the senior male was the sovereign ruler, and women, children and slaves were not considered worthy of moral teaching. In response to this, Paul presents a household called where Christ is the Lord and sovereign ruler, and everyone behaves in accordance to this starting point - centred on love. Women, the first to be mentioned, were to love their husbands by voluntarily subjecting themselves to their husbands wishes. In return, husbands should love their wives’. The concept of love is missing from both Hellenistic and Jewish discussions on marital relationships. Love this a perfect bond, working together willingly. Children (refers to a relational status, not age) were to obey their parents, while the duty of the parents was to teach children the way of God. Deuteronomy 21:20 refers to dealing with the rebellious son, but Paul focuses on the role of the father not to turn his son into one, by provoking, making resentful or bitter. The relationship between parents and children is one of love and willing obedience. Telling slaves to obey their earthly masters, appears to be Paul condoning slavery. In Greek culture, the slave belonged entirely to the master. By addressing slaves in this letter, Paul is affirming that slaves are rational and moral beings capable of relationships with masters and the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ as Lord, is above the master. Christian masters of slaves were to provide for them, justice and equity. Masters also have a master in heaven. Summing up the household code one could say that all had to submit to the Lord Jesus, in whatever they did in word or deed. Paul tells them, “whatever you do, do it to please God, not people”. All of these relationships are built on love, and where one submits to another, it is based upon humility. Dunn reminds us that Paul’s letters were often sent to house churches and a well-run household was a precedent for a well-run church.

Christians of this period chose to work for the transformation of society rather than revolution. They did not become radical critics or abandon society. What they work for was a reorientation and the new motivation for which the key was ‘to do everything to please the Lord’.

Having delivered his household code, which is based on a God/Christ centred life, Paul returns to worship. For Paul, worship was not just prayers and hymns but more a way of defining one’s entire existence as having prayerful alertness. Here it is worth remembering that Paul is addressing the church as a community and not as a group of individuals. As Paul has already hinted, they are a community of believers joined together constantly in prayer. To Paul, prayer is not simply an act of presenting one’s personal wishes and desires to God: rather it is a way for believers to participate in the unfolding of God’s redemptive plan in history.

As we’ve already seen, Paul regards the period from the crucifixion as the eschatological era, which will be fulfilled when Lord Jesus comes in glory. Therefore, he urges the Colossians to be alert. As Jesus taught, there were to be alert to avoid temptation, but Paul asks them to be also alert and watching for the coming Christ. For these followers, participating in the victory of the cross (baptism) believers are called to live in the light of the final consummation of this victory. This, for Paul, is worship.

Paul charges the church at Colossae to pray for his co-workers and for himself in their mission to spread the gospel. Paul is pleading with the believers to recognise the urgency of the eschatological moment as he calls them to participate with him and his co-workers in the mission that is to take place before Christ returns.

Paul reminds his listeners that they have a responsibility to act appropriately in this new eschatological era. Paul emphasises how one’s knowledge of the true gospel will lead to a right-thinking and acceptable response to such a gospel.

The letter finishes with greetings from the community of believers with Paul - this is not a personal letter. This letter is to be exchanged with letters to other churches, to be shared and read out. Finally, Paul signed the letter in his own hand, showing that if it was written by someone else, e.g. Timothy, then it carries Paul’s approval.