

COLOSSIANS

Lesson 8

“ROOTED IN ACCOUNTABILITY”

Ice Breaker: Do you have anyone who holds you accountable for your behavior? If so, do you behave differently when they are not around?

INTRO: Up to this point, Paul has given general rules for being in the new man, but beginning in this verse he begins to give specific instruction. He brings into focus the way we are to relate to others in various types of relationships. Paul wants his readers to know that God wants His people to come to grips with His authority and not look for ways to exert their own will into relationships. While human accountability has some value, ultimately God is the one who holds us accountable for our actions.

Col. 3:18-4:18

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. **19** Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. **20** Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. **21** Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. **22** Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. **23** Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, **24** since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. **25** Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.

1 Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. **3** And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. **4** Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. **5** Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. **6** Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. **8** I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. **9** He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) **11** Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. **12** Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. **13** I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. **14** Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. **15** Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

17 Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord."

18 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Q: In verse 18, Paul tells wives they must submit to their husbands. Does this mean husbands can do whatever they want and wives have to submit to them?

- While no one is ever expected or allowed to sin in order to submit to the legitimate authority God has placed over them, Christ does expect wives to submit to their husbands.
 - It may be that Paul doesn't say, "Obey unless he tells you to sin" because he doesn't want the wife to see herself as the judge of the husband in areas of opinion.
 - A wife will no doubt have different opinions about what is right or wrong than her husband at times.
- "As is fitting in the Lord," most likely means the wife should submit to the husband **because this is right for those who are in Christ...** this is how Christ expects Christian wives to behave.
 - Some things are "fitting" for those in Christ while other things are not "fitting".
 - A wife submitting to her husband is "fitting" behavior for those in the "new man".
 - The only reason a wife should refuse to submit to her husband is if the husband is clearly violating scripture.
 - **"I THINK it is wrong"** is not a good enough reason to not submit.
 - The husband is accountable to God for his leadership and God will develop his judgment or discipline his rebellion.
 - When a wife refuses to submit to her husband, she is in fact, rebelling against God.

Q: In verse 19, Paul commands husbands to love their wives and not be "harsh" toward them. The Greek word for "harsh" is *pikrainō*, and it means "to be embittered." He could have issued any number of commands for husbands... why "do not be bitter"?

- Paul may be anticipating a natural male tendency.
- The command not to be bitter could mean:
 1. "Don't be resentful towards your wife." Men can become resentful when they are faced with hard to understand differences or disappointments.
 2. "Don't treat your wife harshly." The Bible often speaks of bitter treatment or bitter circumstances.

Q: In verse 20, Paul tells children to obey their parents in everything. How are we to understand such an all-inclusive word as "everything?"

- The command to obey parents "in everything" is to be understood in the context of the letter.

- Paul is still dealing with acceptable and expected behaviors that are consistent with life in the “new man”.
- This command to obey parents in all things would in no means imply that a child has to obey a parent who is commanding the child to sin.
- It may be that Paul doesn’t say “obey unless they tell you to sin” because he doesn’t want the child to see himself or herself as the judge of what is right or wrong in areas of opinion.
 - A child will no doubt have different opinions about what is right or wrong.
 - Saying “I **THINK it is wrong**” doesn’t give a child a valid excuse to not submit. God holds the standard much higher.
- It seems the only time it is appropriate for a child to disobey their parents is when the parents are **clearly violating** a direct scripture.

Q: How long should a child continue to obey their parents? Is this intended to last even into adulthood?

- It is not absolutely clear when a child is no longer expected to submit to their parents, but Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:7 and Eph. 5:31 all quote Gen. 2:24 where God said a man should leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two become one flesh.
 - It seems likely that when a child gets married the parents release them to form their own family and the command to obey would be mitigated.

Q: In verse 21, Fathers are commanded not to “embitter” their children. The Greek word for “embitter” is *erethizō*, and it means “to provoke.” What is Paul telling fathers?

- The command not provoke your children is a command not to irritate or exasperate.
 - If a father is overbearing, unfair or harsh with the child, the child may conclude the father doesn’t know or care what pleases God... he may think the father is just trying to please himself.
 - This can make the child discouraged and give them a warped view of God.
 - This kind of parenting would emphasize teaching children to please the parents rather than pleasing the Lord.
- The goal of fathering is to bring the children up in the “training and admonition of the Lord.”
 - Eph. 6:4 “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the **training** and instruction of the Lord.”
 - “Training” (*paideia*) is a word that carries the meaning of education, instruction, nurture, discipline and correction.
 - “Instruction” (*nouthesia*) is warning and advice.
 - The father’s role and purpose is to teach his children how to please God.
- There is (to my knowledge) no instructions for child rearing given to mothers in scripture. There is, however, instruction given to fathers (Eph. 6:4).
 - It seems that even though our society places child-rearing responsibility on mothers, God holds fathers accountable for their upbringing.

- It is possible that the husband can (and maybe even should) delegate some of these responsibilities to the wife... after all, she is commanded to be submissive to him.
- If she does a poor job, he is still responsible because God holds him accountable.

****In verses 22-25, Paul gives instructions to slaves. While we don't live in a society that permits slavery, there is still a very applicable lesson to be learned about accountability.*

Q: In verse 23, Paul says the motive for doing what is right whether someone is watching or not is to please God, not man. What does this teach us about accountability?

- Some Christians feel the only way to keep people well behaved is by a human structure of accountability.
- Accountability means somebody is watching you to make sure you don't do something wrong.
 - It is not human accountability that keeps people on the straight and narrow path... it is realizing we serve the Lord Jesus and work faithfully out of conscience toward God.
- Human accountability only works when someone is around, God's accountability always works because he is always around!
 - Human accountability is based on a fear of man which scripture says is a snare (Prov. 29:25) while God's accountability is based on fear of God.
- Accountability in scripture is spiritual, not institutional.
 - **Romans 14:12** *"So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God."*

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT: *Answer the following questions as best you can, then get with your discipler/discipleship group and discuss your answers.*

1. Who do you have the hardest time submitting to: husband, parents, employers, church leaders, brothers or sisters in Christ, God?
 - a. What does this tell you about how rooted in accountability you are?
2. Who are you more afraid of upsetting: God or some person?
 - a. What does this tell you about who you are really being accountable to?
3. Has a fear of people (human accountability) ever been a snare for you? If so, how?