

T R I N I T Y
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D A L L A S

The Sermon

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Colossians 3:18-21

"A Christ-Centered Family"

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TRANSCRIPT

So, take your Bible and turn with me to the book of Colossians, Colossians chapter 3 and verse 18, as we work our way through this book. And I'm going to be with us every Sunday, I think, until we finish the book of Colossians, so I'm locked in with you on this, looking forward to it. Colossians chapter 3, I want to begin reading in verse 18. And the title of this message is "A Christ-Centered Family. A Christ-Centered Family." Let me begin reading in verse 18.

"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart." This is the reading of God's word; let us go to Him now in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, as we have read this passage now, we ask that You would, by Your Holy Spirit, teach us the meaning of this passage, and help us understand its relevance and what it requires of us this day. I pray for everyone here today that this would be a rich and rewarding Sunday morning in church, that lives would be changed and transformed, and that even those who are without Christ today would enter into the kingdom. So this is our prayer, in Christ's name. Amen. [End]

In these verses the apostle Paul is describing for us what are the distinguishing marks of a Christ-centered family. Not everything that can be said about a family is contained in these few verses, but these really are the essential building blocks. This really is the cornerstone, the backbone, if you will, for a Christ-centered family, and what we're learning is that all of life must be lived under the lordship of Christ. Jesus is Lord over all, over every area and every aspect of life. There's not one step that we ever take in our Christian lives that is outside of the jurisdiction of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is Lord in our private life, He's Lord in our work life, He's Lord in civic life, but He's Lord also in our families, Lord over our families.

God is the one who designed the family, right? It's not the product of culture or society. It's not the creation of government officials or philosophers' academies, the family is the result of the infinite genius of God, and it is designed for your good. It is designed for the good of the church. It's designed for the good of the nation. It is God's blessing upon any people if they will follow His blueprint for the family. And conversely, when we choose to go our own way with a family, it inevitably just breaks down and disintegrates. No nation will be any stronger than its family units. No church will be any stronger than its family units.

And on the other hand, when the family is compromised, society implodes. When the family is compromised, schools disintegrate before our very eyes. When the family is compromised, government becomes run by incompetent tyrants. The family is the most essential building block for the common good. And so I want us to look at this passage. There are four verses, 18-21. Verse 18 is addressed to wives; verse 19, to husbands; verse 20, to children; verse 21, to fathers. And so this is the bare essentials for your family to be put into right order.

So, I want to begin in verse 18, and I want you to notice "a submissive wife, a submissive wife." Paul begins by saying, "Wives, be subject to your husbands." Now I realize how inflammatory this is today. I realize how our culture would just rise up and repudiate that very verse. And sad to say, there are many churches that would gag before they would preach this. But here it is right here. It's in your Bible, it's in my Bible: "Wives, be subject

to your husbands." "Wives" is in the plural, it refers to all Christian wives. There are no exceptions here. The word "wives" means married woman.

And it says, "Wives, be subject to your husbands." Now these two words, "be subject," is a military term, and it means for a soldier to line up under a commanding officer in order to obey his orders and follow his direction. It is what we call a compound word, which means two words joined together in the original Greek when this was written – and I think you'll find this interesting. The main root word means to line up, to be in alignment. And there's a prefix that's put in front of it which means under. And so to be subject to means to line up under the one who has been placed by God in authority over you.

The word "subject," "be subject," could just as easily be translated, "be in submission," or, "be submissive." And so this implies that God has placed the husband in a place of leadership and authority over his wife. It's not that the husband and the wife are equal in authority; they are equal in redemption, and they are equal in value in God's kingdom, but they are not equal in authority in the home, that the husband is over the wife.

Now these two words, "be subject," I want to dig down just a little bit deeper here with you, and I think this will help enrich our understanding of this. This verb, "be subject," it's in the present tense, which means that every moment of every day, the wife is to be in submission to her husband. It's in the middle voice, which means it's her responsibility to assume this submission, that her husband cannot necessarily impose this upon her, she must willingly choose to be submissive. It is in the imperative mood, which means it's a commandment. This is not a suggestion or an option that's tossed out to Christian families, and you could do this or you could choose not to do this. No, it is a command from the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, that has come through the apostle Paul to the church in Colossae and to every believer on every continent and every generation.

And so, "be subject to your husbands." The word "husbands" here means a married male. And even here in a somewhat indirect way God is

establishing that marriage is only between a man and a woman. It is never a man and a man or a woman and a woman. Such is an abomination and blasphemy against God. And so, "be subject to your husbands," it's interesting it does not read, "be subject by your husbands," but, "to your husbands," and it really puts the ball into the court of the wife, that you must choose to do this, because this is God's will and design for your life.

And he now reasons with us, at the end of the verse, why we should do this. He says, "as is fitting in the Lord." "Fitting" means proper, it means what is due. But when he says, "in the Lord," this just rises above culture, it rises above generations, it rises above countries. It's, "in the Lord," and this is a matter of the lordship of Jesus Christ. In fact, this is the very first step following verse 17 which says that we are to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Number one on the list is verse 18, "Wives, be in submission to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." So ultimately, a wife submits to her husband, not so much because of him, but because of the Lord, that the Lord is over your husband, and the Lord is over this family, and the Lord is over your house. The Lord is over your life, and so you must be in submission, because this pleases the Lord.

Now as I have already said, there's much resistance to this today. The feminist movement has invaded the church and corrupted the minds of countless pastors and ministers, as well as wives in the pew. And many ministers are hesitant to even preach this verse, and they would try to water it down and make it say something other than what it actually says. Many ministers are hesitant to even say this in a wedding ceremony as the vows are given that, "Will you be in submission to your husband?" And many ministers here wanting to be popular and wanting to take the easy road, they would sooner choke on their own tongue than to say these words publicly; but here it is right here in the Bible. And there are many biblical counselors who are silent in requiring what the scripture so clearly says here.

Ultimately what I want you to see, ladies, is that this is a matter of submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ. And God has asked something of you that's very difficult and very challenging, because there's not a woman here today who has a perfect husband; and he is flawed, and he is a sinner

saved by grace. But nevertheless, in many ways, this is the challenge of a lifetime, to live in submission, humble, quiet submission to your husband. I think we need to see Ephesians 5:21. And just so you'll know, Colossians and Ephesians, they were passed around in the early church together, and so they're known as partner epistles. And so the church that would have Colossians would probably also have Ephesians, at least at the beginning, until they gathered the New Testament together.

But in Ephesians 5:22, Paul says the very same thing. He says, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands," - here it is again - "as to the Lord." So your submission to your husband is a reflection of your submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ, verse 23, "For the husband is the head of the wife," - and "head" here refers to authority. "The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church" - verse 24 - "is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything." And the only footnote that I would put on that word "everything" is "as long as it does not contradict the word of God." As long as it does not contradict the word of God, then you are to be in submission to your husband, lined up under his authority.

First Peter chapter 3 is also an important passage that we need to consider this morning. First Peter chapter 3, beginning in verse 1, Peter addresses wives, as well as husbands. But he begins in verse 1 of 1 Peter 3, "In the same way," - let me just stop there. He's referring to the responsibility to be in submission in whatever arena of life you find yourself. And it really began back in chapter 2 and verse 13, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as one in authority." So the Christians were to be in submission to those who were in authority over them as it relates to the government.

And then in verse 18, "Servants, be submissive to your masters" - and it carries over into the workplace, that those who were slaves were to be in submission to their masters. And so as we come to chapter 3, verse 1, he says, "In the same way," meaning, "just like it is in the civil arena and just like it is in the vocational arena, even so, you're to be in submission in the

home." There's no area of life in which we as Christians are not living in submission to someone or something over us. The whole Christian life is a call to humble submission to the Lord. In fact, the very first step into the kingdom of God was a step of self-denial and taking up a cross and beginning to follow after Christ; and every step of the way of the Christian life we walk in submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

And so in 1 Peter 3:1, "In the same way," – we're not surprised to hear him say that – "you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word," – and they will be disobedient to the word, of course they will. Nevertheless, you're still to be in submission to them. Why? – "that they may be won" – meaning won to obedience – "without a word by the behavior of their wives." The way they have a gentle and quiet spirit will speak volumes to their husband and probably bring conviction upon him, that he must now return to a path of obedience, not because she's preaching at him, but because of the godly life that she lives before him. She is modeling for him what she desires for his life, verse 2, "as they" – the husbands – "observe your chaste and respectful behavior." "Chaste" means holy and pure, and "respectful" means a reverential awe, that you would have respect for your husband that is a reflection of the far greater reverential all that you have for Christ Himself.

Verse 3, "Your adornment" – meaning what you wear – "must not be merely external – braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses," – verse 4 – "but let it be the hidden person of the heart," – there's your real beauty, not on the outside, but on the inside, he says – "with the imperishable quality." Now that's important. "Imperishable quality" means a gentle and quiet spirit is never out of fashion, it's never out of vogue. It is always beautiful for the woman to have this gentle and quiet spirit, he says, "which is precious in the sight of God." I mean, the world may mock it, others on the outside may scorn it; but it is precious, it is glorious, it is beautiful in the eyes of God. And ultimately, that's all that really matters, right, is, "What does God think about this?" If you please God, it does not matter who you displease; and if you displease God, it does not matter who you please.

So, verse 5, "For in this same way in former times," – now that's important, meaning submission of wives to husbands is not a new teaching, it's not something that's just popped up in the New Testament, that it goes all the way back to former times in the Old Testament – "the holy women also, who hoped in God," – put their faith and trust in God – "used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands," – and he'll use the illustration in verse 6 of Sarah and Abraham. But to even take a step further back, it really goes all the way back to the garden of Eden, that it was the man who was created first, not the woman; and the woman was created for the man, not the man for the woman principally. And so the woman was created to be a helper, one called alongside to help the man in what it is that God calls him to do. And so in verse 6 – "just as Sarah obeyed Abraham."

Now that must have been hard, because Abraham was not perfect. We just preached through the book of Genesis and we saw Abraham even lying about Sarah and telling the Egyptians, "She's my sister, not my wife," to save his own neck. I mean, Abraham, though he is the father of the faithful, he was not a perfect man; and yet we read here, "Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord," – that doesn't mean she worshiped him, it just means she was respectful towards him – "and you have become her children" – meaning you followed in Sarah's example – "if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear."

I mean, a woman may say, "Well, if I am in submission to my husband, that I'm just terrified at the thought of what that would mean for me." Well, that's why you need to hope in God, and that's why you need to put your trust in God, short of there being any physical harm that would come to you. So, this is what the scripture is teaching, that, "Wives, be in submission, line up under so as to receive direction from your husband."

Now as I was preparing this, it popped into my mind the book of Proverbs, and Solomon, who knows a lot about wives. He had a lot of wives. I think his life philosophy probably was, "More is more." And so who better to comment on wives than the man who had a harem of them.

In Proverbs 19, verse 13, Proverbs 19:13, Solomon writes, "The contentions of a wife" - that means the strife, the nagging - "the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping." It just is relentless. And constantly badgering and pecking at the husband to do something is having the opposite effect of what she would want.

And then Proverbs 21:9, "It is better to live in a corner of a roof" - that means up in an attic - "than in a house shared with a contentious woman." I mean, Solomon recognized this. I mean, "This woman is just hen-pecking me to death; I would rather be holed up in this attic and the latter pulled up than to be down in the living room with this woman and just hear the constant after me on this."

And in Proverbs 21:19, he pushes the point even further. He says, "It is better to live in a desert land" - that's an abandoned wasteland - "than with a contentious and vexing woman." "Vexing" here means bitter, angry, provocative, knows how to hit his hot buttons. Solomon says, "It would be better to live in nowheresville than to live in the most lush place I could, if it meant having to live with this vexing woman."

So ladies, what an assignment you have. I didn't come up with this, I'm just the messenger, okay. But let me encourage you by saying this: Christ is not requiring anything of you that He Himself has not already personally demonstrated in His own life. In reality, all He is asking you to do is to follow His example of humbling yourself and being in submission to the will of God, which is exactly what Jesus did when He left the celestial palaces of glory, surrounded by all of the angelic hosts singing His praises, and took upon Himself the form of a bond servant, better translated "a slave," and came down into this world of woe and got into our skin and humbled Himself to being subjected to mockery, and scorn, and mistreatment, and assassination attempts, and ultimately to be crucified. The Lord hasn't even asked you to go to that extreme, just to follow His example of submission to authority.

Now let me also encourage you with this. Jesus said more than once, "He who humbles himself will be exalted, and he who exalts himself will be humbled." If you would with a willing heart humble yourself beneath the mighty hand of God, God has ways by which He will exalt you, one of which is your children will probably rise up and call you blessed because of the example that you are setting before their eyes. They can see dad, they can see the faults, and you are choosing to humble yourself beneath this man. That is speaking volumes to your children of how they too must humble themselves beneath the Lord, and prepare the way for them to come to faith in Jesus Christ.

So Jesus was submissive to the will of God at a far greater price than He will call upon you to be submissive. By the grace of God you can do this. In your flesh and in your own mindset and in your own ability, you cannot do this. But by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, He is all-sufficient to lift you up and give you the strength to do this.

Well, I've put off long enough verse 19. So, that was a filibuster on verse 18. Let's just close in a word of prayer right now. Heads are bowed, eyes are closed, hearts are open, and I'm just going to leave the building, okay.

So this is coming back to us men now. And I contend that God is asking the harder thing of men than what He asks of women. So, verse 19, I want you to see, second now, "a sacrificial husband." We've seen a submissive wife, now a sacrificial husband. So, verse 19, "Husbands, love your wives." It's very simple, but very impossible in your own strength. "Husbands" means married male. You'll notice in the plural, "husbands," referring to all Christian husbands. None of us are excluded from this.

"Husbands, love your wives." There is so much in this word "love," it means far more than just to have romantic feelings towards your wife. It is a Greek word that is the highest of all the Greek words for "love." There are other words that Paul could have used which refer to more of a friendship type of relationship. But this is *agapao*, which means to love sacrificially. It means to love unconditionally. It means to treasure her, and

to prize her, and to delight in her, and to show esteem to her. It too is in the present tense, which means you are to be always actively loving her. And it's in the imperative mood that this is a command that God has for each and every one of us, whether we feel like it or not, whether at that moment she's really worthy of it or not or deserving of it or not. That's inconsequential. The fact is that Christ through Paul is commanding every husband to make whatever sacrifice is necessary for the good of your wife.

He then adds, "and do not be embittered against them," which implies that there will be times when they will frustrate you, and there will be times when they will irritate you. Wherever you have two objects and they are moving close to each other, they will be rubbing each other sometimes the wrong way, and there will be friction and there will be heat that comes from friction, and he says, "When that happens in the relationship," and it will happen in the relationship, it says, "do not be embittered against them."

The word "embittered" means exasperated, to not be worked up and let a small thing become a big thing and you end up shooting a mosquito with a cannon. "Do not become irritated and angry with them." Whether it actually is because of the way they are, "You're acting just like your mother" – no, don't ever say that, okay. I didn't say that at the first service, I want you to know that. Regardless – hey, what happens at the second service stays at the second service, okay. All right. We're in this together. There's honor among thieves; I won't tell if you won't tell.

So, regardless of how that wife may be acting, speaking, do not, do not be embittered against them. And the only way you can do this is for the love of Christ to be shed abroad in your heart, a supernatural love, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and for the fruit of the Spirit to be being produced in your life – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. That's what we need, men. We need for God to override anything that would be frustrating us and to give us this loyal love.

This is so contrary to the times in which Paul wrote this. He was not in the buckle of the Bible Belt, okay, in the 1950s, and everyone's watching *Leave*

It To Beaver, okay. This is in the first century Ancient Roman Empire where husbands would often fly off into a rage against their wives; and because of their greater physical strength and their louder voices they would use harsh words and verbal threats and even physical violence to intimidate their wives, and this was just a common practice. Wives were considered to be – I hate to say this – but in the first century, many times they were considered to be a purchased possession, that your role is for reproduction of children, and would often live in another house, and were treated very poorly. And now Paul writes this, and rather than putting women down, he's actually elevating women and putting them on the highest pedestal by saying, "You need to love this woman like Christ loves the church, and you need to esteem her and treasure her and consider her like a weaker vessel," which is always a more valuable and expensive piece of pottery. The weaker it is, the more valuable it is, as opposed to an old tin can, which has no value to it.

And so turn with me over to Ephesians 5. I read it for the women; we need to hear it for the men. In Ephesians 5:25, Paul writes this; and you, no doubt, are familiar with this passage, we hear it read at weddings: "Husbands, love your wives," – To what extent? What would that look like? – "just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." I mean, He went all the way to Calvary, He went all the way to Golgotha and submitted Himself to the horrible, horrific death of a cross.

That's the example that God sets before us, men, that there is no sacrifice too great for us to make in order to love our wives. And this is why I said earlier, I think God asks the more difficult and more demanding of the man. It would be easier to be in submission than to have to die for your wife. And this is not hyperbole, this is setting the bar so high that the only way that a man can even make progress towards this is by God being at work in his life and soul.

Look at verse 28: "Husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself." In other words, "Whatever I can do to make you happy will make me happy, and whatever is hurting you that I'm not doing or that I am doing, I'm not callous to that; it

hurts me too, because we are one. When I can make you happy, then that makes me happy; and when I upset you, that really upsets me." That's what Paul is saying. And so, men, what a challenge. And this is really where life is lived if you're married. This is where the rubber meets the road.

One other cross-reference. If you would come back to 1 Peter 3, 1 Peter 3:7, one last word that Peter has to say to the to the husbands. And it's interesting, both Paul and Peter begin with the wife, and then they end up with a husband, and it's almost like he's saving the strongest words for the last to the husband.

And so, in verse 7 he says, "You husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way." You need to really get to know your wife. You need to know her temperament, her personality. You need to know her sense of humor. You need to know her strengths, you need to know her weaknesses. You need to know what she likes, you need to know what she does not like. You need to become an expert on your wife.

And she is like no one else's wife. She's not like your mother, she's not like your sister, she's not like her sister, she is a one of a kind jewel made in the image of God, restored in Christ. You need to study her. You need to exegete her. You need to interpret her. You need to understand her in order to live with her in an understanding way. She is unlike anyone else's wife. And when you get together with the guys and the guys are talking about their wives, their wife is no comparison for your wife. This is your wife, and there's no one in the entire planet that has been wired by God like this woman.

So he says, "live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker," literally as with a weaker vessel. I mean, I've already turned my cards over on this to explain this, that when you go into a jewelry store or a pottery store, the cheap and inexpensive objects are those that are made out of steel. The very, very valuable ones are those made of China. It could be a Parisian China that has come from Europe, and it's so fragile it has to be

handled with great care, or you could easily break it. And your wife is the weaker vessel.

Now she may be stronger intellectually. She may be stronger in some ways in resolve. I mean, just have babies period is – no man could ever even think about going through all of that. I mean, wives are so strong in so many, many ways. But Peter here does recognize that there is a unique, soft femininity that God has built into a woman, and you need to recognize that, that the jab you can give to another guy, the sarcasm that you can toss out to another guy, and that other guy laughs about it, and you're having this locker room bonding time of humor; that jab doesn't work with your wife, that sarcasm doesn't work. She is a weaker vessel; hold her softly.

And then he says, "show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life." See, she is equal in the kingdom of God with you, she's just playing a different position on the team. She's a fellow heir of the grace of life. You're not better than she is, it's just that God in His wisdom realizes that every body can only have one head. You can't have a body with two heads, that would be a freak. And so only one head. And that head, God has designated to be the man; and that's not the woman. She has a different position to play on the team, but an extraordinarily influential and important role on the team. And in fact, you wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for a woman in your life named your mother.

And then he gives the reason why. He says, "so that your prayers will not be hindered." Your prayers are going to have some brakes on them and are not going to reach God with the same receptivity until you humble yourself and love your wife as Christ loved the church. So, men, what this is is God's call to your life to die – to die to self, to die to yourself. And Paul says, "I die daily." And Jesus said, "We must die daily." And there is not a Spirit-filled woman on this planet who would not gladly submit to a husband who loves her like Christ loves the church. So we understand what the Lord requires of us; it's the challenge of a lifetime.

Let's finish this out, verse 20, "a subservient child." Paul now addresses the children that are born in this relationship. And to state the obvious, please note this husband and wife do not have a dog, they have children. They're not millennials, okay, they actually have children; how about that. They don't have puppies, they have babies.

"Children, be obedient to your parents." And let me add: "first time obedience." This isn't a negotiation process to enter into where there's give and take. No, you be obedient the first time your mother or your father says for you to do something, because they have total complete authority of your life. The government has zero authority over your child. The school board has zero authority over your child. The medical clinic has zero authority over your child. You have total complete authority over those whom you have begotten and brought into this world.

The verb "be obedient," in the imperative mood. It's a command, present tense. Constantly, continually, morning, noon and night, you are to be in obedience to your parents. And, parents, this means you're going to have to teach obedience, you're going to have to require obedience, and you're going to have to discipline for disobedience. And there's so much we could say about that, time does not permit. But, "be obedient" is – I just want you to know this. It's another compound word – I just find this so interesting. It's two words put together in the original Greek language, and the main root word is to listen. It comes into the English language as "acoustics."

And there's a prefix put in front of it which is "under," to listen under, or we would say today in our culture, "Listen up," and that implies that you're under, if you have to listen up; and this too implies that your parents are over you, and they are given the authority to tell you what is required of you. They can tell you when to go to bed. They can tell you when to wake up. They can tell you what you're going to eat. They can tell you what chores around the house are assigned to them. Your parents can tell you what sports you can play, what entertainment you can participate in, what concerts you can go to. Your parents can tell you what movies you're going to watch, what music you're going to listen to. You're not an island under

yourself up in your bedroom, you are under the authority of your parents in everything. In fact, he goes on to say that.

Notice, he adds, "in all things." That's an across the board authority. The only exception to this would be if your parents required you to do that which is contrary to the word of God; otherwise, you are to obey them. And I learned as a young boy negotiating with my father was just a waste of time, a waste of my time, that his decisions are irreversible, they are immutable. His decisions are like that which was from before time shall be throughout all time.

And children need to understand that, children can ask questions; but there is to be compliant, humble, immediate obedience to parents. And if children will learn that at home, it will carry over to school, it will carry over to the civic realm, it will carry over to work they have been taught what it is to be under the authority. Whether it is a policeman, whether it is a school teacher, whether it is a boss, whether it is a professor, they should have learned this a long time ago at home. And so, parents, it is incumbent upon you to teach this to your child, and at the end of verse 20 it says, "for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. So who cares who gets upset about this; if it's well-pleasing to the Lord, then it's well-pleasing to you and me.

And so what Paul requires here is really just an extension. I want you to understand this. This is just an extension of the Ten Commandments. And the Ten Commandments are still on the books, by the way. The fifth commandment, Exodus 20:12, says, "Honor your father and mother." This goes deeper than just obedience, it's the attitude behind the obedience. It's one thing to be obedient and have a stinking attitude, it's something else to be obedient and have a humble submissive spirit before your parents.

"Honor your father and mother," – and he gives this motivation, listen to this – "that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives to you." You know why you'll live longer if you're obedient to your parents? Because in the Old Testament it required the death penalty, if you were disrespectful or disobedient to your parents. You say, "Where's

that verse?" Glad you asked. Exodus 21:17, the very next chapter. It's high on the list of fleshing out the Ten Commandments. Exodus 21:17, "He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." That would just about wipe out the United States right there alone.

So, children you are to be in submission to your parents. And the reason why our country is in anarchy is because fathers and mothers have given up the high ground of their parental authority and have let their children run wild; and now it spills over into the streets, it spills over into society, because they were never disciplined at home to be under the authority of their parents.

Well, I need to finish this. So, verse 21, I want you to see "a sensitive father." This is the fourth component part of a Christ-centered home. "Fathers," - meaning male parent; "fathers," plural, meaning all male parents - "do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart." What this implies is that with this much authority given to a father, a unilateral authority, there is the danger of that father being too heavy-handed, and of that father becoming unreasonable, and of that father being too demanding and too strict, and so Paul has to put this caution out. But what it implies is how much authority is given to a father, that Paul now has to just tap the brakes just a little bit on how you use this.

"Do not exasperate your children." Do not stir them up to anger," - do not provoke them unnecessarily or irritate them, when maybe a softer word at a certain time could have made the same point; and he gives the reason why - "so that they will not lose heart." To lose heart means you've been so domineering with them and you have lacked love, you have lacked grace, you have lacked even a sense of humor, you have lacked some fun even at home, that you have so overshadowed them that they lose heart.

"I can never be perfect enough for Dad. I can never meet this standard. I never get encouragement. All I do is have him point out where I'm wrong. He never points out when I'm right. All he does is discipline me for my wrong, he never rewards me for what is right." And so he says, "Do not

exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart." So literally, "loose heart" is another compound word; it just means to be without passion. The wind is just taken out of their sails. They have no more drive to excel and to achieve because you have just crushed their spirit and you have just come down hard and been such a stern taskmaster that you have virtually commanded them to make bricks without straw.

And so this is saying to fathers, "You need to season your words with grace at times. You need to build up and encourage at times. You need to learn to laugh at times." But there are other times it's not funny, and it is requiring a very straight answer that, "If you ever talk to your mother like this again, it's going to be a come to Jesus meeting."

So, this is God's design. I mean, who is capable of this? Who is adequate of this? You may be thinking, "This does not look like the home I grew up in." Yeah, you may be thinking, "This doesn't look like the house in which I now live."

Well, as I close, I just want to remind you by way of encouragement that there are no perfect families. There isn't a family here today that can meet this mark exactly as it's laid out, that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Every one of us, every family in this room. That is why we need God's grace in our lives, God's strength, God's Holy Spirit, God's word. That is why we must grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I saw this with my own father. He was a strong, stern taskmaster as a young boy; but I saw him grow as a Christian and grow in the Lord, until the end of his life he wasn't even the same man. He was so tender-hearted, he was so patient, he was so kind, he was so giving, he was so sacrificial. He may be the greatest Christian I've ever known. And so we're all in this process of growing as Christians. And as we grow as Christians, we grow as wives and husbands. But the key is you've got to grow as a believer in Jesus Christ.

I need to bring this to a conclusion. But let me just say this: there are some of you here today who have never yet come to faith in Christ. You may be here because someone invited you to be here. We're thrilled you're here. You may be here because your wife brought you, your husband brought you. You may be here because your in-laws are here. I don't know what's going on in your life. But you're here today by divine appointment, I can tell you that, and that God has ordered your steps to be here. And of all Sundays for you to be here, you hear this text preached. And it may be God's way of getting your attention. You cannot have a Christ-centered family until you have a Christ-centered life, until you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

So this is impossible to pull this off without Jesus Christ in the very center of your life. And so if you have never bowed the knee to Jesus Christ, if you have never humbled yourself beneath the mighty hand of God, I call you today, this moment, as His messenger, to step out of the darkness and step into the light, to step out of the world and step into the kingdom of God; and that necessitates that you repent of your sins, that you turn away from your sins, that you confess your sins to God, and that you turn to Jesus Christ, who is the Savior of sinners. He is the friend of sinners. If you would come to him in humble, childlike faith, He would receive you, I know He would. You do not have to become perfect in order to become a Christian, or none of us in this room would ever be a Christian. You just need to confess and acknowledge that you have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and that Christ is a Savior of sinners, and that He will save you today this very moment if you will but believe in Him.

I'm not asking you to get up out of your seat and walk forward. I'm not asking you to raise a hand. I'm not asking you to repeat a prayer after me. I'm asking you in your heart of hearts to do business with God, for you to confess your sin and to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, such that when you get up out of here and you walk out to the parking lot, you walk out different than you walked in, that you walk out with Christ in the very center of your life. And He says, "Him who comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." There's no hesitation on His part to save you, any hesitation is on your part; that's on you, not on Christ, that's on you. And so you may never have another moment like this again to be in a church service and to hear the word of God like this. I would urge you, do not let this moment

pass without your coming to faith in Christ. God bless you. I will close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, thank You for this passage in Your word. We are challenged, we are convicted of what this standard is, and yet maybe in a strange way we're encouraged, because we know what the wisdom of Your mind has laid out; and we want to follow Your path. So I pray for everyone here today that we would be on the right path. May even husbands and wives talk to each other in the car as they drive back home, as they would pledge themselves one to another afresh again. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

Receive the benediction, and then you're dismissed. "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever." Amen. God bless you.