

Sermon: Storing Up

Text: Colossians 3:18-4:1

Introduction:

I'm going to begin with a very pointed question:

- What do you honestly, truly, to the core of your being believe to the true about the Bible?

Three years ago (2017) was the first time in Gallup Poll's history that biblical skepticism (believing that the Bible is a book of fables, legends, history and moral precepts recorded by man) SURPASSED people's belief in biblical literalism (believing that the Bible is the actual Word of God, and is to be taken literally, word for word). Fewer than one in four Americans (24%) now believe that the Bible is literal truth. The majority of Americans fall in the "middle"—believing that the Bible is a "holy book"—but that not all of it should be taken literally. In other words, it's really up to each person to pick and choose which parts to believe and obey—and which parts to write off and not obey.

How about you? Where do you fall on this continuum? How would you answer the question of Biblical literalism?

The reason I ask this today is because the passage that we are studying (Colossians 3:18-4:1) would more than likely be in the "I don't really believe that" category for folks who think that they can pick and choose. The reason, I think, has a lot to do with how our culture views things such as gender, marriage, family, marital roles, slavery, submission and authority. These are touchy subjects to say the least. And to go against the prevailing culturally attitudes on these topics is to be viewed as irrelevant (at best), and intolerant and bigoted (at worst).

Take some time to discuss these questions...

- How does our culture view gender, and gender roles?
- How does our culture view marriage & marital roles? Is it sacred? It is even important?
- How does our culture view the family? What is the definition of a family?
- How does our culture view slavery? What is the reaction to even the mention of slavery?
- How does our culture view submission? What is the reaction to even the mention of the word "submission"?
- How does our culture view authority? What are some of the "battle fronts" in our nations cultural war on authority?

Not to get too deep, but think for a minute about what the Bible says about this world that we live in. Who is the "god of this age"? (see 2 Cor. 4:4) What is Satan's objective according to 1 Peter 5:8 and John 10:10? Doesn't it stand to reason that Satan would try to twist and warp every truth of God—especially those as important as marriage, family and authority? What we believe about the Bible will determine how open we are to listening to what God says.

Examination:

- Read **Colossians 3:12-17**
 - I know this is a review of our passage from last week. But it is very important to understand what Paul is saying in these two paragraphs as the groundwork for today's passage. Look through the list of five virtues described in verse 12. How would you summarize these virtues? What are some attitudes that underlie these virtues? Is this list directed to any particular gender or role or status? What additional virtues does Paul mention in verses 13-14?
 - Read verse 17 out loud. Is there anyone for who this command doesn't apply?
 - Let's just say that you're the president of a very large and prestigious company—or you hold some other position of influence and importance. According to these two paragraphs, how are you to treat other people? Are you to view yourself as being "above" others, or "under" them?

- Read **Colossians 3:18-19**
 - Paul tells wives to submit to their husbands, as is fitting to the Lord. What is your gut reaction to this verse? To what extent has our culture influenced your thinking about this verse?
 - Does what Paul say specifically to wives in v.18 differ in any way from what he has been saying with respect to all people in vv.12-18?
 - The Greek word for "submit" is the word "*hypotasso*", which is a Greek military term meaning "to arrange—as in troop divisions—in a military fashion under the command of a leader." With this in mind, what do you think Paul meant by verse 18? Does this shed light on what Paul is saying here?
 - Paul commands husbands to love their wives. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, and discuss what it actually means for a husband to love his wife.

- Read **Colossians 3:20-21**
 - Why do you think God is so adamant that children are to obey their parents (remembering that this made God's "Top Ten" list of commands in Exod. 20)?
 - In what ways can parents embitter and discourage their children? Does constant criticism and reprimand destroy a child's sense of worth? How can discipline be balanced and consistent? What is the value of small acts of kindness? How has this topic impacted your life—for good or for bad?

- Read **Colossians 3:22-4:1**
 - Why do you think Paul gave this command to slaves and masters, instead of just outright denouncing slavery and telling slaves to revolt and overthrow or leave their masters?
 - How can verses 23-24 be viewed as the "big idea" of this entire passage? What is that big idea?

Application:

What has God been saying to you through this study? Why do you think our culture has such a revulsion to any teaching that has to do with submission? How might this lesson on submission apply to you, personally, this week?