

## CHRISTIANS KEPT FROM SIN NO. 3037

A SERMON  
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*“And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent you this day to meet me: and blessed be your advice, and blessed be you, which has kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with my own hand.”*  
*1 Samuel 25:32, 33.*

THESE verses are taken from the story of David's coming into contact with Nabal the churl. Nabal was a great sheep-master and David and his 600 men had been especially careful not to injure his flocks, but had protected them from any pilfering that might have been practiced by wandering bands of desert rangers. At that time Nabal was shearing his sheep and David, who was in some measure of need, thought it a suitable time to ask something from him, according to Eastern custom, in return for the services which he had rendered to his shepherds. So he sent 10 of his young men to ask Nabal for the *backsheesh*, but, instead thereof, they received an insulting message to take back to their master. Thereupon, David—who seems to have been always of a quick spirit, whether for right or for wrong—who made haste to obey God's commandments, but who made equal haste to obey his own impulses—girded on his sword and bade every man do the same and declared that they would march to the house of this churl, Nabal, fall upon him at once and destroy him and all that appertained to him, root and branch. While he was marching in haste to carry out his stern determination—as God's Infinite Goodness would have it, Abigail, the wise wife of the foolish Nabal, met him and confessed that her husband was a man of Belial. She pleaded that she had not seen the messengers whom David had sent, besought him to accept the provisions she had brought and urged David to leave the avenging of himself to God, so that when he came to be king, it would be no grief of heart to him that he had shed blood needlessly, or had acted as his own avenger. David who had Divine grace in his spirit, although he was on his way to do wrong, felt the force of Abigail's rebuke, sheathed his sword, thanked her and thanked the Lord, too, that he had thus been preserved from committing a great sin which might have left a great stain upon his character and been a source of trouble to him for the rest of his life.

Learn from this, dear brothers and sisters, that the best of men need to be always on the watch, lest, in some sudden temptation, they should be carried off their feet. You may fancy that you have no occasion to fear certain forms of temptation, but you do not know what you may do. The wall of resolution may be strong in one particular wind, but let the wind only blow from another quarter and the wall may speedily fall. You may think yourself to be strong simply because, as yet, you have not been tested and tried as you will be sooner or later—and then, in a single moment, when you are least prepared for it, you may be overthrown. Remember our Lord's words to His disciples, “What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch,” for, in such an hour as you think not, temptation may come upon you and woe be unto you if you are not found watching! Therefore, commit yourselves unto the Lord and, “watch and pray that you enter not into temptation.”

Here, too, we may observe what a blessed thing it is when, in hours of crisis, the God of all grace is pleased to interpose to preserve us from committing a certain sin into which we had almost fallen. Our steps had well-near slipped, but, just then the Lord sent some angelic messenger to us, even as Abigail came to David. For that Almighty Love which has manifested itself in restraining grace, let us render grateful songs of thanksgiving as we look back upon our past lives, for we can scarcely tell how often we should have dishonored our character and our profession if it had not been that God came to our rescue and kept back His servants from presumptuous sins.

The subject upon which I am to talk to you, as the Holy Spirit shall graciously guide me, is the great blessing of being prevented or preserved from sin. I shall speak first upon *the blessing itself*. Then, for a few minutes, upon *the means which God employs to secure it*. And then, thirdly, upon *the great blessedness of which we may be partakers if we endeavor, like Abigail, to prevail with others so as to prevent them from going into sin*.

## I. First then, we are to consider THE GREAT BLESSEDNESS OF BEING PREVENTED FROM SIN.

It is an unspeakable blessing to have sin forgiven. We cannot measure the heaped-up blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered. But surely there is a very special favor rendered by God's grace to those who are kept from the grosser sins into which so many others fall and who are converted early in life after having been hedged about by Divine grace and not allowed to plunge into the foul kennels of iniquity in which others riot and revel. Those who are thus preserved not only have to sing of *repenting* grace, as they must do however purely they may have lived, but they can also tell of the *restraining* grace of God which would not let them wander into the paths of the destroyer as others did!

To be kept from sin is to be kept from many evils for, in the first place, *sin has such a hardening effect upon the conscience*. There is no man who ever sins without having some trace of it left upon his mind and heart. For one thing, it is more easy for him to sin the next time. An impulse has been given and a habit begun which will make it almost inevitable that he shall fall into that particular sin again. He who has served Satan once will be likely to serve him ten times and, on each succeeding occasion, he will serve him more vigorously and readily. He will not need nearly as much temptation, but will go greedily after evil when the habit of sinning has taken firm hold upon him. But there are some who have been kept from overt acts of evil and so, when they hear the gospel, they receive it like good ground into which the seed falls and brings forth abundant fruit. But there are others who, because of iniquity, are like the highway trodden hard by the feet of many—and when the good seed falls there, the birds of the air find it an easy task to steal away the grain because it has not penetrated below the surface. Do not imagine that you can live for twenty, thirty, or forty years in sin and yet be just as likely to be converted as anybody else is! I know that God can, if He pleases to do so, call you at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour as easily as at the first, but, as far as you are concerned, if you harden your neck, you have no right to expect that He will do so, but rather to expect that you shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. So that it is a mercy to be kept from sin in order that this hardening process may not even begin within our mind and heart!

Besides, *he who sins in a little way makes that sin, as it were, a steppingstone to something worse*. David wisely prayed, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse You me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant, also, from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." He seemed to feel that he would not go on to the great transgression if he was restrained from presumptuous sins—and he was right in thinking so. You dear young people who through the Lord's loving kindness and tender mercy, have been brought up among gracious influences, know that you have sinned and that your sin has done your soul such evil as only God's grace can remedy—yet you may thank the Lord that you have not been permitted to learn to sing the song of the drunkard, or to live an unchaste life, or to forsake the assembly of God's people—and so put yourselves out of the reach of the usual means of grace, as perhaps you would have done by this time if you had not been checked while you were children. A gentle stream, if it is allowed to flow unhindered, becomes at last, a foaming torrent that sweeps away its own banks and causes loss and damage far and wide! Thank God that the current of your life was checked and guided while it was but a stream! May the torrent of sin never overflow your character and career.

There is this blessing about being restrained from sin, namely, that *it saves us from much sorrow in later life*. It should be no grief or offense of heart unto David, said Abigail, to think that he had shed blood causelessly, or had avenged himself. No sinner, when converted, although God has forgiven him, can ever forgive himself—and no child of God, although God has blotted out his sin, can ever blot it out of his own memory as long as he is here on earth. You can see that David was a different man, after his great sin, from what he had been before. He still sang Psalms to God, but there was a hoarseness about his voice which was not there before his great transgression. His Psalms were Psalms of sorrow, whereas before they were glad and joyful Psalms that tripped to lightsome music. I remember once hearing a strange sort of preacher say that sin did a Believer no harm—a more terrible Doctrine than that could drop from no man's lips, but then he added—"except that it destroys his peace of mind." And it seemed to me that such a result as that was harm enough even if there was nothing else. "He that wears the herb called 'heart's-ease' in his bosom," says Bunyan, "is a happy man even though he sings in rags." But he whose heart smites him, as David's heart did, need want no harder blow! May those of you who are unconverted be preserved from gross sin—and may those of us who are saved be preserved from falling by temptation into any evil, lest we have to wring our hands in anguish and go with broken bones to our graves.

Further, he who is kept from sinning has to bless God that *the consequences of his sin upon others are averted*. It is a dreadful thing to know that there will be some in heaven who were the means of sending others to hell. I have sometimes wondered what must be the emotions of those who have sinned—especially in the foulest sense—when they are converted, but find themselves quite unable to induce their fellow sinners to even listen to the gospel. Mr. Whitefield tells us that as soon as he had tasted that the Lord was gracious, he tried to think of all the companions with whom he had been accustomed to play cards, or to indulge in any kind of sinful sport. And he thanked God, he said, that he never gave himself any rest until he had done all that was in his power to bring them to the Savior. You, my friend, were once an infidel and you are now a Believer—but you cannot recall the words that you spoke in those past days. You may refute, to your own satisfaction, the arguments you then used, but you cannot so readily make others see the force of your refutation. You, my brother, were known, at one time, to use language which was unclean. You abhor it now and you rebuke it when you hear it from another—but you cannot make others forsake the habit which they learned from you. You cannot get out of your boy's memory that song which you used to sing in his hearing—you cannot get out of your daughter's heart that evil word which she heard you utter. It must go on rankling forever in her spirit and doing everlasting mischief unless the Sovereign grace of God shall intervene to prevent such a calamity. What a blessing it is to begin with God in our youth before we have helped to pull down the walls of Zion, or even cast a stone against them! It is an unspeakable blessing to be saved in old age and to be able to sing of triumphant grace which has blotted out innumerable iniquities. But it must be—at least on this side of heaven—a cause of constant regret to such a late penitent that he should have worked so much evil which it is not possible for him to repair.

Besides, dear brothers and sisters, it is always a blessing to the Christian—to whom I speak now—to be kept from sin, *for thus his character is preserved* and much of his influence for good will depend upon his character. When backsliders are restored, we cannot help standing in some doubt concerning them—and let them afterwards live as carefully as they may, it will be very difficult for them to ever honor the Church as much as they have dishonored it. If there is but one waterfall in a river—only one in a thousand miles—everybody hears about it and it is marked on the map. But if another river should flow on smoothly, gladdening the meadows on either side, and bearing navies out to sea, it would not cause such a noise as that one waterfall would make! In like manner a holy life is not talked of, by an ungodly world, one half as much as one unholy act of an inconsistent professor! How they delight to speak of that! How they roll the story of the sins of God's people under their tongues as sweet morsels! You may repent of your backsliding, you may become even more zealous afterwards, as you should do, but my dear brothers and sisters, after having once stained your reputation, it is not easy to wipe out the blot. It is infinitely better to be kept true to our first profession until we enter into heaven, upheld and preserved by the love and grace of God.

And, only once more upon this part of the subject, you may rest assured that even if sin is forgiven and Divine grace enters the heart, *never is it better to sin than not to sin*. There is a house on fire. Well, we are grateful if the fire engine comes rattling up almost immediately, if the water supply is abundant and if, by great exertions, every life is saved and much of the property is preserved from destruction. Yet it would have been a greater blessing if there had not been any fire at all. There is serious sickness in the home, but the physician is skillful, the nurse is wise and watchful, the disease takes a favorable turn, the man's life is preserved—he is restored to health and is thankful for his recovery. Yet he would rather not have been sick. There is a wounded soldier. He is carried on an ambulance to the hospital, the surgeons extract the bullet that injured him and bind up his wounds. The man is ultimately restored to the ranks, but he will carry to his grave the scars of the wounds that he has suffered. It would have been a great deal better for him if he had not been wounded at all. So is it with the wounds that sin has made. Let the results of evil be ever so well removed, it can never be better for any of us to fall into sin than to be kept out of it! If it were otherwise, it would look as if sin were not that damning a thing that God's Word tells us it is—it would seem as though it were but a trifle and that there was no need for Calvary's Cross, or of all the wondrous arrangements of Everlasting Wisdom and Love for the saving of men from sin and its awful consequences! Let us cry to God, my brothers and sisters, that we may be kept from sin! May this be our prayer night and day, "Lord keep us even from vain thoughts, but, above all, keep us from any acts that would be dishonoring to Your holy name!" We do not want to sin in order that we may know what sin is like. We do not want to plunge into evil for the sake of being washed from it. We do not want to go into this horrible pit and this miry clay for the sake of being

drawn out of it. Our earnest desire is that we may be kept from the grosser forms of sin till we are saved by Sovereign grace and receive the new nature which is the portion of the children of God—and that after that, we may walk in all well-pleasing to the glory of God our Savior!

**II.** Now, secondly, let me remind you of **SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD KEEPS US FROM SINNING.**

He does this, of course, in the grandest way *by the work of His grace within our soul*. There is no protection against sin like the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! If the evil spirit goes out of the heart of man and it is swept and garnished—if the good Spirit does not come and dwell there, seven other spirits, yet more wicked than the first, will return to take possession. There is no way of keeping out the fire of sin except by having the fire of grace blazing within the spirit. We must fight fire with fire! Let your soul be filled with all the fullness of God and then when the prince of this world comes to you, he shall not be able to overcome you. The grace of God is the great antidote to sin.

But God also uses other means, even before their conversion, to keep some from the grosser sins and vices in which others indulge. Among these, there is, first, *early education*. There are some who, happily, have never known the sins which others have forever to regret. They have been like plants kept in the greenhouse—they have never been tried by the frosts of this vile world. Be very thankful for this if it is true concerning you, but do not regard it as a substitute for being born-again. Remember that you who are the most amiable, the most excellent, the most zealous, the most honorable must be born-again just as surely as the most abandoned, the most dissolute and the most profane. Regeneration is an absolute necessity before any soul can enter heaven—and you must not be satisfied with anything short of that! Yet you may be grateful if, like Timothy, from a child you have known the Scriptures, or if, like Samuel, you have been brought up in the house of the Lord from your very early years. Be thankful that you have been kept from much sin into which others have fallen.

*Christian association*, too, is of the utmost value in helping to keep us from sin. There may be here a young man who has just come to London. After leaving that quiet country town where he was accustomed to attend the services at the little Meeting House, it may be that there is a strong temptation upon him to throw off all the restraints of his past life and to hide himself among the thick trees of this great forest of London and to indulge himself in sin from which he has been hitherto preserved. My dear friend, if you desire everlasting ruin, this may be your fatal choice! But that you may not even wish to make such a choice, I strongly urge you to endeavor to form associations with Christian young men before you have been laid hold of by the active servants of Satan who are lying in wait for you. Come and join one of our Bible classes, or the Young Men's Christian Association, or find some Christian friends somewhere or other. Form associations and acquaintanceships which, if they do not actually bring you to Christ, may at least keep you from going far astray from the path which your godly parents have always desired you to tread. May the Lord grant that instead of your deciding for Satan, now that you are left to yourself, a sense of responsibility may so press upon you that you may decide, through the Holy Spirit's power, for the Lord Jesus Christ! If, this very night, you, as a newcomer into this great city, should surrender yourself to the Savior, what an eternal blessing it would be to you! The Lord grant that it may be so, and He shall have all the praise! Still, if you are not at once converted, Christian association will be very helpful in keeping you from outward sin.

And you, my brothers and sisters who have grace in your hearts, will often find that association with warm-hearted Christians is one of the very best ways of keeping you from evil. Some of our Church members have gone to live in the country where they have been only able to worship with a cold and indifferent congregation where the minister has not been more than half awake—and I have observed very serious declension in their spiritual life. When I have met them afterwards, and have ventured to speak to them about it, they have told me that it seemed like going from a hothouse into an ice well—and they confessed that they did not feel as earnest as once they did. O Christians, do prize any association with God's people that is possible! If any of you are in positions where you can enjoy Christian fellowship and you have the opportunity of earning ten times as much money in another position where you must give up that fellowship, do not do it! It is always a loss to Christians to lose the communion of saints. No amount of worldly prosperity can ever make up for the loss they will sustain by leaving an earnest gospel ministry and an affectionate people. Thank God that He makes use of other Believers to help you in the road to heaven—and often to restrain you from sin!

The Lord, too, is pleased very frequently *to make use of our position in society* to keep us out of evil. I mean this—some men have always been poor, although they have tried again and again to

rise above the level of their poverty. Once or twice they have almost succeeded, yet, not from lack of ambition nor lack of industry, but as though God's Providence were at cross-purposes with them, they have always had to come back to that same sparse diet and tiny cottage! My dear friends, the Lord knew that you could not bear to be rich. Had He permitted you to possess more than you now have, you might have become proud and worldly. It was better for you to live near to God in poverty than to be a backslider and be rich. I believe that many of the reverses which God's people suffer in trade are preventives from sin—when the Lord sees them beginning to launch out and to speculate—and perhaps to become associated with some rich man who has no grace in his heart, the Lord says, “My servant is going on very dangerous ground. I must stop him before he is lost.” And He soon does it. The man's substance takes to itself wings and flies away—and thus he is rescued from the threatening danger.

Some are preserved from sin by *physical infirmities*. “Well,” said one who was lame, “I believe I would never have run in the way of God's commandments if it had not been for my lame leg.” “Ah,” said another, “and I sometimes think that I would never have seen Christ if I had not been blind.” Just because their infirmities incapacitated them for enjoyment of the world, they were made to look for higher enjoyments and to seek that *spiritual* health which is everlasting. Blessed are the lame and the blind who enter into heaven—and blessed are they who have but one eye, yet who enter there, while some who have two eyes are cast into hell!

Others, doubtless, have been kept from sin by *severe sicknesses*. These come to us, I believe, not by chance, but by Divine ordination. We say to one another, “I cannot think where I caught that disease.” Or, “I cannot imagine why such-and-such a sickness should have come to me.” Perhaps you were more out of danger on your bed than you would have been anywhere else just then. Had you been out of that bedroom, you might have been in a position of very serious trial which you could not have been able to endure. I can bear my witness that at least in some of my many sicknesses I have been able to see the reason for them as plainly as I can see that twice two are four. Even when we cannot see the reason, God knows that there is a reason for it and if we cannot see it, it may be all the deeper and may lie all the nearer to the very heart of our Christian life. Your sicknesses, pains, griefs, depression of spirits and all sorts of trials are often sent to you to prevent you from sinning. They tether you, like the horse that was in a meadow with a clog on him, and a friend said to the owner, “I wonder that you clog such a fine horse as that. It seems such a pity.” “Well,” replied the owner, “I would rather clog him than lose him. And if I did not clog him, I would lose him. He has a habit of jumping hedges and ditches—and we cannot keep him unless we clog him.” So, my brother, my sister, you have a clog because the Lord would rather clog you than lose you! He would sooner make you suffer here than permit you to suffer forever in hell.

Once again, God's people have very often been kept from sin by *remarkable Providences*. And some, who are not yet the Lord's people, have been kept from certain forms of sins by very remarkable interpositions of Divine Providence. You probably all remember the story of the Quaker who, one night, felt an irresistible impulse to rise from his bed and ride to a neighboring town. When he got there, he stopped at a house where he saw a light in an upper room. He knocked, and knocked, and knocked again and, at last a man came to the door to ask what he wanted at that time of night. The Quaker replied, “Perhaps, friend, you can tell me, for the Lord has sent me to you, but I do not know why He has done so.” “Come upstairs,” said the man, “and I think I can tell you.” There he had fixed a rope with which he was about to put an end to his life, but God had sent His servant to him just in time to prevent the contemplated crime. Such striking Providences as that may not happen to all or any of us, for we may not require them. But they do happen to some people to prevent them from sinning against God. It may be also that the Providences which do not appear striking to us, do appear striking to those holy angels who minister to God's people and who bear them up in their hands lest they should dash their feet against a stone—and who constantly adore the wisdom and goodness of God in interposing to keep His servants from going aside into sin. The wheels of Providence, which are full of eyes, have those eyes continually fixed upon us—and those wheels are always revolving on our behalf to God's Glory.

No doubt many have been kept from sin by *a message to their conscience*, either through a minister, or through a tract, or through a text which they read in the Bible, or a kind remark from a friend. There are members of this Church who, in the Lord's gracious Providence, owe their salvation to a word spoken to them in the street. There is especially one who was tapped on the shoulder just as he was going into a theater, and who was entreated—by one who did not know him personally, but who had mistaken him for somebody else—not to go into such a place as that, but

to come with him that Thursday night and listen to the preaching of the Word of God. It was remarkable that such a mistake as that should have been made, but it was a blessed mistake for him and he rejoices this night that he finds himself in God's House, numbered among the Lord's people!

**III.** This brings me to the last point which is that IT WOULD BE A VERY BLESSED THING IF CHRISTIAN PEOPLE WERE MORE EARNEST TO PREVENT SIN.

This matter was put very plainly under the Old Testament command, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart: you shall in anywise rebuke your neighbor and not suffer sin upon him." Yet, under the Christian dispensation, I am afraid that we are very negligent in our endeavors to prevent sin. Some of us, it may be, think a great deal too much of our dignity. No doubt we are very respectable people, though everybody does not know it and does not treat us with the respect we feel is due to us. Perhaps we suspect others of not being all they ought to be and, therefore, our attitude towards them is not what it used to be. Then they begin to have harsh thoughts concerning us—and in that way Satan has reason to rejoice because Christian people are weaned from each other—and very grievous sin is caused by the roots of bitterness that are thus planted in the soil of the church! Now, my brother, suppose that somebody did treat you very disrespectfully? Instead of your saying, "I will be avenged on him," suppose that you say to yourself, "If he were to treat me as I really deserve to be treated, God knows that it is very little respect I should receive from him. The man has slandered me this time, but if he knew what my faults really are, he could hit me in a much more tender part"? It is sometimes said that when a boy is wrongfully flogged, "If he does not deserve it now, he probably has deserved it at some other time when he has not had it, or he will deserve it in the future." So, if a rebuke should come to me wrongfully, I will lay it by in case I need it at another time! A Christian sometimes says, "If you tread on a worm, it will turn." Yes, I know it will, but I hope you do not consider a worm an example for a Christian—especially when you have the Lord Jesus Christ to be your Exemplar! If you tread on a worm, it will turn because of the pain you have needlessly caused it. But if you are trodden on by another person—and you are a Christian—you will forgive him and try to do him good. "Do my lord of Canterbury an ill turn," it was once said, "and he will be your friend as long as he lives." Happy are they who kill their enemies by heaping coals of fire upon their heads! Do so, my brothers and sisters, whenever it is possible, and do not sin by standing up for that foolish dignity of yours! Be willing to be a doormat, if it is necessary, as well as a doorkeeper in the House of the Lord and, in that way, you will be all the more honored, for "he that humbles himself shall be exalted."

It may be that in certain company we may hear talk that is not what it ought to be. And there may be some wit or merriment connected with that talk. But if so, we must not laugh at it, because though we might laugh at the wit, others might suppose that we were enjoying the evil that was mingled with it. It is well for a Christian to put his foot down firmly in such a case as that and to say very emphatically, "As far as your mirth is proper and there is nothing in it that is defiling, I am willing to join with you, for I, also, am a man, and am of a cheerful disposition. But you are going too far, now, and I must enter my protest, for I cannot, by my silence, give my consent to such talk as that." You ought to do that, my brothers and sisters, and you would often find that there would be some who would thank you for doing it. Have you ever heard how Mr. Wesley once stopped a man from swearing? He was riding on the top of a coach and there was an officer in the army there who kept swearing, so Mr. Wesley, at last, very gently said to him, "My dear Sir, I want you to do me a great favor." "What is that, Sir?" asked the officer. "Why," he said, "if you should hear me using profane language during this journey, I wish you would kindly tell me of it." "I see," said the officer, "what you mean, and I appreciate your kindness." You might, perhaps, if you did that, receive a stormy reply and make the swearing person worse. Still, you would have done your duty by rebuking the sin gently and affectionately.

How often we might prevent sin if we could come in just when some are on the very verge of doing wrong. Perhaps you say that you have a pastor to do this work, but I have often told you that in such a Church as this, you must all be pastors. With 4,200 members in one Church, what can even two pastors do? What can all the elders and deacons do? The only hope for the Church is that God will watch over you all and that you will all watch over one another. You who are elderly, you who have long been kept faithful, you who have the respect of your fellow members—you, perhaps, know of inconsistencies springing up. If so, do not go and talk about them, especially to those outside the Church. "It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest," so, instead of talking to others, go and speak to the offending one! You may thus, perhaps, be the means of saving a soul from death and hiding a multitude of sins. May God grant you wisdom, Divine grace, discernment and affection to deal rightly with such cases! Let it be the resolve of every Christian man and woman to imitate Abigail's wise way of turning David from his evil purpose! You Christian women, do not be

backward in this matter, but use to this end that winning way you have. I expect Abigail pleaded far better with David for Nabal than any man could have done, for she was a woman of understanding and her beaming countenance caught the eyes of the hasty and angry warrior. And he paused awhile to listen to her wise words—and so she won what she set out to gain. I pray that you may all use the powers which God has given you, not to lead others into sin, nor to confirm them in it, but to hold back, as far as you can, all who are about to commit any act of transgression.

May God add His blessing to this message, for the Redeemer's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:**  
*Colossians 3 and 4:1-4.*

**Verses 1, 2.** *If you then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.* This is the best proof that we are really “risen with Christ”—that we set our affection on things above!

**3-15.** *For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in Glory. Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things' sake the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience: in which you also walked some time, when you lived in them. But now you also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not to another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is All, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, heart of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. If any man has a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do you. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called in one body; and be you thankful.* You notice that the Apostle again and again speaks of what we have put off and what we have put on, or of what we are to put off and to put on—“You have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man.” “Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, heart of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. . . And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” Let the blessed girdle of love bind upon you all these choice adornments of a true Christian's character!

**16, 17.** *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.* Now the Apostle, guided by the Holy Spirit, gives injunctions concerning various family and domestic relationships.

**18.** *Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.* It is seemly according to nature. And it is still more “fit in the Lord.”

**19.** *Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.* Never say a bitter word against them and especially never dishonor them in the household, before children or servants, as some have done, but do all that you can to manifest love and tenderness toward them.

**20.** *Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.* Nowadays, there are some children who seem to be the head of the family and the parents obey them in all things. This is very foolish and wrong! And when their children grow up and become their plague and curse, they will bitterly lament their folly in putting things out of joint and not keeping the house as God would have it kept, the children in their place, and the father in his.

**21.** *Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.* Some fathers do. They expect more of children than they will ever get—and more than they ought to expect. And they lay heavy burdens upon them which are grievous to be borne and for little faults there are severe chastisements. This also is wrong.

**22-24.** *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for you serve the Lord Christ.* If you do all your work in that spirit, how noble it becomes and how

cheerfully you will get through it! You may have a master who is unworthy of your service, yet, if you “do it heartily, as to the Lord,” you will have rest of heart even in serving those who are froward and perverse—and in due time the Lord will reward your service.

*25. But he that does wrong shall receive for the wrong which he has done: and there is no respect of persons.*

**Colossians 4:1.** *Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal.* I sometimes think that the good men who chopped the Bible up into chapters—for it is not in chapters in the original—must have hoped that we would not read this message to the masters, as he had put it in another chapter. But I never like to read about the servants without also reading about the masters. There is six for one, and half-a-dozen for the other and, as is usual, in the Scriptures there are balanced duties. If there is an exhortation to the children, there is generally one to the parents close by. And if there is a word to wives, there is one for husbands, too. So let us read that verse, “Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal.”

*1-4. Knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*

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