

Special People, Special Behaviour

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Date: 08 November 2020

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- [0 : 0 0] Cheers, Jack. Cheers, Daniel, for reading there. And good evening. Welcome to St. Silas. My name's James. I'm on the staff team here tonight. And it's a great joy to see you guys. Hopefully my battery will last, so let's give this a go and see what happens. Let me pray as we begin. So, Father, as we come to consider this topic of family life and work tonight, please help us to work within our hearts this evening.
- We know that some bits here are hard. And we pray that we would draw nearer to you through this passage and that you'd speak to us tonight.
- In Jesus' name, amen. Great. And it'll be a great encouragement to me if you could keep your little white sheet there. Well, a couple of years ago, I went on a kid's summer camp, and I took a bunch of kids from our local youth group on this summer camp.
- And this summer camp was known as the trifecta camp. What do I mean by trifecta? I mean, we managed to get out the fire brigade, the police department, and the ambulance service all in the space of one night, between 2 and 4 in the morning.
- [1 : 1 7] And my endearing moment on the camp was seeing one of the ringleaders of the camp, one of the naughty kids, walking down the aisle of the school, and casually lean over and put his elbow through one of those fire alarm plates.
- And so we had to evacuate the whole school at 4 in the morning. And when we were going there, and hence, Martin's never asked me to do any kind of youth work or anything like that.
- And I took with us, one of the guys in our group was this guy called Gordon. And Gordon had dysphonia, and so he sounded like Darth Vader all the time.
- And he was a lovely, lovely kid. But he was also one of those kids who was easily led astray by other kids.
- And so in the middle of the night, once all these shenanigans had gone on, I was exasperated and trying to bring order to these kids in this camp and to this band of misfits that I'd taken along, all brilliant, of course.
- [2 : 2 2] And I came up with this line that I said to Gordon, and that was, special kids, special behavior. And what I was saying to him was slightly to get him to understand that he didn't have to behave like all the other kids on the camp.
- Yes, they may have been running around, running amok, but he was special. He was part of our youth group. We had a special way of behaving. We loved the Lord, and we tried to encourage one another in that.
- And our leaders were committed to looking after our kids. And because of that, he should behave in a special way. And what Paul has said to the Colossians so far in this letter, who are young Christians and who Paul has written to, is that if they are trusting in Jesus, then they are very special.

And we remember, if we look back to 3 verse 12, if you've got a phone or something like that, maybe at home you've got a phone. And I'll just read it again. And therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with all those attributes of Christ.

And so they are chosen. They are holy. And they are loved by God. Immensely special. And the issue that the Christians in Colossae faced was that the influences of their day were telling them that they weren't special, that Jesus was not enough, and that they needed to add stuff onto Jesus to be truly special.

[3 : 56] And the word that Paul uses in Colossians for special is that word fullness. So if you want to be full, you need to add stuff onto Jesus. And likewise, today, we are being told that Jesus is not enough and that the influences in our day are telling us if we really want to be full in life, then we need to add onto Jesus.

And Paul's response to this is nonsense. You either have Jesus alone or nothing at all.

And straight away, you can see how disconcerting that might be to a new Christian, to someone who's just come into the faith, who's wondering about Christianity. What's going on here?

I'm hearing two different messages. What should I believe? And then Paul gives his purpose in writing earlier on that rather than disunity, he wants them to be united.

So in chapter 2, verse 3, he says, he writes, and I'll just read it for us there, my goal is that you may be encouraged, he writes to encourage them, and that you may be united in love and so that you may have the full riches of complete understanding in Christ.

[5 : 15] And so Paul writes to encourage and reassure us here tonight in Glasgow, and he wants us to know that we are special and that we'll never be more qualified than we are already in Christ.

And we remember how early in chapter 1, he told us that in Christ, Christ is the firstborn and the sustainer of creation, that in Christ, the very fullness of God dwells.

And there's nothing more that you can know about God than has been told you in Jesus, and that in Christ, you have been brought to fullness. You're not lacking in any way.

And so Paul goes on to say, they may be sitting in Colossae or Glasgow physically, but spiritually, chapter 3, verse 1, they have been raised up into the very throne room of God, and that one day, they will return spiritually with Christ in glory.

And because of this, Paul stresses to them that they are a new people, and they should be a new people in how they live. They are special people, and they have special behavior.

[6 : 26] And so he's, over the last couple of evenings at St. Francis, we've been looking how that looks like in our relationship to God, and then in our relationship at church with one another.

And then tonight, we're going to consider what that looks like, what those distinctives look like in our relationships at home, and at work. And then next week, we're going to consider what that looks like in our relationship to the world.

And so our first point is serving the Lord Jesus at home, verses 17 to 21. So serving the Lord Jesus at home.

And growing up, we always used to go up to Swaziland. I was raised in South Africa. We used to go up to Swaziland for our Christmas holidays, and we used to drive up to Swaziland. And you know what it's like to go on a family driving vacation.

Maybe you have done it. It's fine if you haven't not. But you know what happens. You start off, and immediately, you're quite excited for the holiday. You've been to the messages.

[7 : 26] You've got your snacks. You're good to go. You're singing songs. You're playing games. I spy. And everyone is happy. And then as the journey goes along, things start to fall apart.

The kids start saying they need the loo. Are we there yet? And then they start hitting one another. And then dad says something like, stop that. And the kids, of course, they just ignore him.

And then dad gets more exasperated, and he says something ridiculous, and over the top, that's like, that's it. You're grounded until you're 18. And then it gets dark, and you miss that really obscure turning that you meant to take.

And then mum starts suggesting that maybe she should take the map. And then father says something, I've got it, dear, through clenched teeth.

And then mum says something like, well, I should have listened to my father and married someone else, to which dad responds, well, we won't say what dad responds.

[8 : 33] And that's obviously slightly outrageous and over the top there. And the reason why it's amusing is because there is a grain of truth in that. Families can be very discouraging and very disunited.

And so tonight, Paul gives us a recipe for a happy home, and he gives us a picture of what it looks like for a family to be new people.

And I realize that I'm not a family man, and the worst thing that you can do as a non-family person is to give tips to family people on how to be better family people, on how to be good parents or good husbands and wives.

And so I'm going to implore you tonight that I'm not speaking on my own behalf, but I'm simply trying to unpack Paul's thoughts for us here. And the first thing that Paul says is that he looks at the relationships between a husband and wife.

So just picking up there in verse 18, wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. And then he goes on, husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

[9 : 47] And as countercultural as this sounds, we need to remember the context that he says this in. So Paul has instructed the Colossians in the letter of Colossians.

He's already said that they have been elevated with Christ into the very throne room of God. Earlier in verse 11, he has said that as God's new people, there is complete equality.

Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all. And he's already said that his goal is for them to be encouraged and united, not discouraged or disunited.

And for them to come to full riches of understanding in Christ. And he's including what that looks like in the family. And so when Paul says, submit here, he's not making a value judgment, but he's speaking about an order that is meant to bring about a unity and encourage them.

And he's only asking wives to do what he's already asked all Christians to do in Ephesians 5 verse 21. Submit yourselves to one another out of reverence to Christ.

[11 : 09] And then we remember that wherever we are in life, our situation changes. We won't always be married. We won't always be children. Hopefully we will always be fathers if we are fathers.

And the thing about submitting and trusting others is that it's easy to do if we respect and love them. But it's not always easy to do if we're challenged and if we find it hard to trust and love them.

So sub-husbands are easier to submit to than others. But Christian wives are called to follow this lead even when things are tough.

And I think Abigail in 1 Samuel 25 is a good model for us in this in when things got tough. You remember Abigail 1 Samuel 25? Look it up afterwards.

She marries an absolute rotter, Nabal. And he really should have listened to his wife if he had any sense. And then you read how out of reverence for God, and for God's anointed King David.

[12:18] And using the wisdom of Proverbs 31, she redeems what is a terrible situation. And as much as Paul is encouraging and speaking to wives and husbands here, if I were to use my pseudo-bro science here, he's also challenging guys to step up.

He wants them to set a vision to take spiritual responsibility at home for the family, to be involved and to lead that family.

And so, if I was cynical, I'd say lots of us when we come to church, we treat church a lot like, and I'm speaking to singles here perhaps, we treat it a lot like temple.

What do I mean? And that is, when I was going to church in South Africa, on the one corner of the street was our church, on the other corner was the Hindu temple. And I'd always ask my Hindu friends, why are you going to temple?

And they'd say, well, if you're a good Hindu boy or a good Hindu girl, you go to temple to meet another good Hindu boy and or another good Hindu girl to marry.

[13:27] And then you kind of zone out for 40 years, and then you go back to temple 40 years later to cram for your finals. And that, if I was a keen Christian girl and I married you and that was your attitude to the spiritual life, that would be discouraging, wouldn't it?

That wouldn't be enormously encouraging. And then notice what else Paul goes on to say. He says, as is fitting in the Lord. And so sometimes there will be times when it's not suitable for a wife to submit herself to her husband, when her husband does not point her to and honor Jesus, and when her husband does and says something that goes against her conscience.

And notice Paul goes against the other extremes. So look what he says to husbands. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. And so some of us, as we head off into the career world, lots of us are taking first steps.

We will experience a pressure between job and family life. And if we are to love our wives well, then we are going to have to learn to say no to sport, no to career, no to many other distractions, because we love our wives and we want to look after them well.

But then also some of us may need to learn not to be overbearing in the family home. And being overbearing is really one of our respectable sins today, isn't it?

[15:00] It's the kind of thing that we don't really speak about. But being overbearing or being a bully is never attractive and it's never acceptable. And so lots of us are singles here and the good news for us is as we go through our singleness, we can think about this and we can work to encourage folk that are married.

And the best way that we can do that is by dwelling richly in the Word as we considered last week and pointing them to Jesus.

Well, having looked at the relationship between husbands and wives, Paul then moves on to address kids and in the same way children, and we're all children, aren't we? We are asked to obey and submit to our parents, to listen to them.

And this will look different at different stages in life. And then also, in return, reciprocally, fathers are called not to embitter their children, not to discourage them, but rather to encourage their kids.

And as we look out for our children, as we look out for them and seek to encourage them, that's going to take wisdom, isn't it? I'm not a dad, but I've seen lots of dads struggle with this.

[16 : 19] And it is a struggle to figure out how to pastor and encourage children in life and in the Lord well. And again, that is going to look different at different stages in life.

And I realize that as we hear this, lots of this might be quite hard for us to hear, and that's okay. We're all growing, we're all heading towards God's kingdom, and we all might not get on board with everything straight away, but we are saved by Jesus, and we've been raised into heaven.

And what this passage is saying is that Jesus is the Lord of our home, and He should be the center of it. Great. So having looked at what it looks like to serve the Lord Jesus at home, let's go on to look like, see what it looks like to be serving the Lord Jesus at work.

Can we look at the second half of our passage there, verses 22 to chapter 4, verse 1. And before I got into the, went into ministry, I served with the Marines, and I had this mate called Nev.

And let me tell you about Nev. Nev was a bit of a proper hand grenade, basically. He was the guy, you put him in a room, and he would explode. And this chap named George joined his section or his team in his fighting company.

[17 : 50] And George and Nev never really got on well. I'll give you a picture of their relationship. Nev put up a picture of George on the wall, and he used to throw darts at him. He was not really enjoying him.

And as it was, they went off to Afghanistan. And the procedure was, when you go out on patrol in Afghanistan, you, if you see a ditch, you cross over a ditch, you say, right, we're going to come back and we're going to take cover in this ditch, and then we'll cross over the field.

And then if we do come under attack, then we'll retreat back to that ditch. And as it was, George and Nev and the rest of their team were crossing this field, and sure enough, they came under attack.

And so all of them fell back to this ditch, except for George, who he took a knee in the field. And as it was, as soon as he took a knee, someone had a pot chop at him and it hit him in the leg.

And Nev was sitting in his ditch and he blew his top. He was fuming. He wasn't on the best terms with George, and this just served to exasperate him even further.

[18 : 59] And what Nev did was, he picked up his gun and he gave it to his companion in the ditch. And he ran out into the field and he picked up George, threw him over his shoulder, and ran back to the ditch and proceeded to bind up his leg and this kind of thing.

And everyone asked him afterwards, because everyone knew what their relationship was like. Well, Nev, why did you do it? And Nev's response was, well, I'm a Marine, aren't I? That's what we do.

And what he was saying was that he had his Green Beret. He had passed the test. So had George. They were special children. They had done all, everything was given to them.

And because of that, they had to act in a special way. There was a special conduct that was needed at work. And the point is that how we conduct ourselves in the workplace, as we look to put Christ at the center, speaks radically about the Lord Jesus and naturally draws Jesus, people to Jesus.

and so just to clarify there, where Paul speaks of slaves and masters there, don't think of 18th century slavery there.

[20 : 16] Martin's done a great video on our YouTube channel that explains it. So do go look that up afterwards. But what Paul is saying in speaking to slaves and workers there, look at the command that he gives in verse 23.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord and not for human masters. Why? And then he goes on. Since you know, verse 24, that you'll receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.

And the question is, why does how you conduct yourself on Monday morning in the office echo in eternity? And the answer is that if you have spent any time in the workplace, then putting Christ at the center of how you do your job is a dangerous business.

To do your work, it's to do your work in a way that's distinctly different from others around you. And it speaks massively about the Jesus whom you serve and love.

And you can imagine the first century slave who he hears verse 22, slaves, obey your earthly masters and everything and do it not only when their eye is on you to carry the favor, but with sincerity of hearts and reverence for the Lord.

[21 : 39] And you can imagine when the slave master goes off for his holiday in Caesarea and all the other slaves start living large and he continues working, how uncomfortable that would be for him.

That would be a dangerous business. and then you can think of the accountant who gets a job and he's encouraged to massage the books and he says no because of his faith in Jesus and that's a dangerous thing to do.

Or maybe you can think of the primary school teacher and they won't teach others the same thing that the other teachers at school are teaching out of reverence for Christ.

That's a dangerous thing to do. They may lose their job over that. And my guess is that not every master then was kind and good. But Paul still commends slaves then to work with sincerity serving the Lord.

And conversely, not every Christian master had good workers or good slaves at the time. But he still, they still had an obligation to provide in chapter 4 verse 1 what was right and fair.

[22 : 59] And so the main idea that drives this passage tonight comes up in verse 17 and 23 that whatever you do, do it out of love and service and service of Jesus both at home and at work.

Special children means special behavior. Now I wonder if you've got the passage there you might just pick it up and just scan through it. Just scan through every time he mentions, Paul mentions doing something in the name of the Lord Jesus or doing something out of reverence for Christ.

I think it's almost every verse that he mentions it. And so the reason for that is our third point is because we serve because we have been served by the Lord Jesus.

And the reason that we encourage you guys to take this on board is not because we say it, not because we preach it, but because it's your spiritual act of worship and Paul tells us in the Bible to do it.

And so pick up on the big command at the end of verse 24. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. We have been served by him and so we should be serving one another.

[24 : 24] Listen to how Jesus speaks of himself at the end of Mark's gospel. Chapter 10 verse 45. For even the Son of Man and the Son of Man there is really his seated on God's throne room language.

The King of all kings the name that Jesus uses for himself when he wants to speak of himself as the ruler of all creation did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

And that even though Jesus was God and that he was God's son and even though he was elevated above all things he was still obedient to his heavenly father he still learnt obedience through what he suffered Hebrews chapter 5 and even though we were his enemies we were alienated from God we were raised in Christ into the very throne room of God and we will return with him with Jesus in glory.

And we read that Jesus loved us his church like a husband loves a wife a bridegroom a bride and that he gave his life up for the church to present them pure and faultless before God's throne and that Jesus even though he grasped that he was fully God that he was the exact representation of God that he had complete equality with God he humbled himself to death and he submitted himself to humiliating death at the hands of his creation.

And the other day I was listening on the radio and they were talking about how big the sun is. A million earths would foot inside the sun and then they explained that the sun was just one star in a galaxy and a galaxy had a hundred billion stars and they said that it was impossible for them to measure the size of the universe because there was this wall of galaxies that blocked out any kind of beams they might send out.

[26 : 37] And so when I read Colossians chapter 1 verse 16 for in him all things were created and then when I read Colossians chapter 2 verse 17 that those things are simply a shadow of the things to come and that the reality is found in Christ and how I have been and how we have been raised with Christ chapter 3 verse 1 and seated at the very right hand of God and that I died and that my life is now hidden with Christ in God and that when Jesus returns I'll restore with him I'll return with him in glory and when I think about all that all the worries of this life all my petty rivalries my anxieties my concerns over status and self-expression and those kind of things they disappear like that and when I think that Jesus died for me and that I can serve Jesus who is very very extraordinary ordinary simply by listening to my parents by loving my wife well by submitting myself to others doing the ordinary stuff of life out of reverence for Christ

I'm absolutely blown away what more could I ever want you would feel immensely special and you would be motivated to behave in a special way that is completely different to the world around you special children special behavior let's pray as we close so father we pray that although we struggle with stuff and we seek you in many ways in life we pray that we would seek to put the Lord Jesus at the center of life at home and what we do and what we say and what we think we pray that we would put the Lord Jesus at the center of life at work we realize that many of our colleagues might not feel the same way and so we pray that we would put Jesus there and that they might see the uniqueness and extraordinary glory of Jesus as we live in very ordinary ways putting him first in Jesus name

Amen Amen Amen Amen