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# New Life in Christ: Household Relationships Reoriented Under the Lordship of Christ (Chapter in Colossians, Smyth & Helwys Biblical Commentary)

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# NEW LIFE IN CHRIST: HOUSEHOLD RELATIONSHIPS REORIENTED UNDER THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

## Colossians 3:18–4:1

As noted above, Paul focuses on the implications of new life in Christ beginning in chapter 3. The first seventeen verses deal more broadly with what it means to be “raised with Christ” and to “seek the things that are above” (3:1). That first section ends with emphasis falling on a communal life of generosity, love, and thanksgiving, as all activities and conversations are carried out under the lordship of Jesus Christ (3:17).

Paul transitions from his general statement in 3:17 to the subject of how the household should operate (3:18–4:1). While this is clearly a self-contained unit, its relationship to the previous subject matter is apparent: love, thanksgiving, and peace should transform the relationships of everyday life, especially those in the home.

[The Household and the Transcendent-Ascetic Philosophy]

There are a number of New Testament and early Christian texts similar in structure and content to the one we find in 3:18–4:1, and scholars refer to these as “household codes” (see Eph 5:21–6:9; 1 Pet 2:11–3:12; cf. 1 Tim 2:8–15; Titus 2:1–10; cf. *Did.* 4:9–11; *Barn.* 19:5–7; 1 *Clem.* 21:6–9; Ign., *Pol.* 4:1–5:2; *Pol.*, *Phil.* 4:2–3). Obviously Paul was not writing this Colossian household code in a vacuum, and neither were other early Christian

### The Household and the Transcendent-Ascetic Philosophy



Col 3:18–4:1 fits somewhat awkwardly into its context, and scholars have sometimes argued that it bears no relationship to other matters in Colossians. However, if the transcendent-ascetic philosophy, attacked by Paul especially in chapters 1 and 2, urges believers to live in the clouds of heaven, Paul pulls them back down to the warp and woof of everyday life in his household discussion. As Marianne Meyers Thompson succinctly puts it, “It is not in being removed from the perplexing and even unpalatable circumstances of life but in persevering with grace and hope that one best models Christian conduct that is lived ‘in a way worthy of the Lord, pleasing to him in every way’ (1:10), but simultaneously recognizes the fundamental ‘hiddenness’ of Christian identity and anticipates the renewal of humankind in the image of its Creator.”


See M. M. Thompson, *Colossians and Philemon* (THNT; Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2005) 92; cf. Ian K. Smith, *Heavenly Perspective: A Study of the Apostle Paul’s Response to a Jewish Mystical Movement at Colossae* (LNTS 326; London: T & T Clark, 2006) 202–203; A. T. Lincoln, “The Letter to the Colossians,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville TN: Abingdon, 2000) 11:553–669, at 659; R. Scott Nash, “The Role of the *Haustafeln* in Colossians and Ephesians,” Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982, p. 176.

## Denarius of Augustus



This Roman coin reads "Caesar Augustus Divi F[ilius] Pater Patriae," which means "Caesar Augustus, Son of God, Father of the Fatherland." (Credit: Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. via Wikimedia Commons [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AAugustus\\_Tiberius\\_aureus.png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AAugustus_Tiberius_aureus.png))

## Philo and the Household

 The Jewish exegete and philosopher Philo of Alexandria represents this same perspective on macro- and micro-cosms of state and household in his interpretation of the life of the Jewish patriarch Joseph. Philo reasons that Joseph had to serve in Potiphar's household as a manager prior to his administration of the whole Egyptian nation as a necessary preparation: "For a household is a city on a small and contracted scale, and the management of a household is a contracted kind of polity; so that a city may be called a large house, and the government of a city a widely spread [household] economy" (*Joseph* 38; trans. Yonge).

authors. David Balch has argued convincingly that the matter of "household management" was a serious and much-discussed topic in Hellenistic literature.<sup>1</sup>

This was more than simply a topic of intellectual interest; it lay at the very foundation of society in the Greco-Roman world. Thus, David Balch and Carolyn Osiek argue, "The household was the miniature reflection, the micro-

cosm, of the state, which was the larger version, the macrocosm, of the household. What threatened one threatened the other, for they

were both conceptually organized along the same lines."<sup>2</sup>

So important was this concept that Augustus was conferred with the title *Pater Patriae*, "father of the fatherland," in 2 BC. [Philo and the Household]

The origin of this Greco-Roman concern over household management can be traced back to Aristotle. In his *Politics* he wrote,

The investigation of everything should begin with [the household's] smallest parts, and the primary and smallest parts of the household are master and slave, husband and wife, father and children; we ought therefore to examine the proper constitution and character of these three relationships, I mean that of mastership, that of marriage . . . , and thirdly the progenitive relationships. (I, 1253b, 1-14)

Aristotle did not arbitrarily refer to these sets of authorities and subordinates but felt that they were differentiated *by nature*.

. . . there are by nature various classes of rulers and ruled. For the free rules the slaves, and male the female, and the man the child in a different way. And all possess the various parts of the soul, but possess them in different ways; for the slave has not got the deliberative part at all, and the female has it, but without full authority, while the child has it, but in an undeveloped form. (I, 1260a, 8-14)



Is Paul simply encouraging the Colossians to conform to this model? After all, he does address the same tri-fold categories as Aristotle. Also, he substantially reinforces the same stratification of authority. A passage like Colossians 3:18–4:1 has discouraged some interpreters from believing that this is the same Paul who wrote about the “oneness” of men and women as well as slaves and free in Galatians (3:28).

Below we will argue that Paul *does* appear to be reinforcing “traditional” roles in the household, but, *within* those predetermined categories, he seeks to infuse them with Christian values, sensibilities, and attitudes. Put another way, many have focused on how Paul’s household code bears similarities to those of pagan philosophers. What should not be ignored, however, are the clear *differences*, ones that are meant to transform relationships in deeply affecting ways. In Galatians 3:28, we observe Paul’s “perfect-ethic”—a vision of the way he ultimately wished for churches and Christian households to operate. Colossians 3:18–4:1 is not a contradiction of this but what we might call a “contextual-ethic”—a contextualized teaching on relationships in a particular time and place. The obvious question is—*why*? Why would Paul reinforce and maintain a stratified power system in the household if he ultimately desired an egalitarian household? Scholars tend to point to four answers.

The first reason is *apologetics*—Paul wished to maintain a proper witness in society, to demonstrate that Christians were not anti-societal social mavericks. Perhaps he was trying to avoid a label put on Christian communities in his time that we place on “cults” in our time—those mysterious, odd, and sometimes downright dangerous groups that have abandoned the wider world. James Dunn articulates this well:

The *Haustafeln* [household codes] of the ancient world were attempts to codify the rules which had been found most effective in promoting social welfare and stability. The fact that the Christians used similar household codes would thus indicate to their neighbours that they too shared the same concerns for society and its good order. It would attest clearly to any suspicious outsiders, or even government spies, that Christian discipleship was not disruptive but rather supportive of society’s basic structure.<sup>3</sup>

One could relate this to accusations that Romans had against Jews, sometimes condemning them for appearing seditious and anti-Roman. For example, Tacitus had the impression that Jews despised the gods, disowned their country, and treated their own family as of “little account” (*Hist.* 5.5). His opinion of Christians was not much better (see *Ann.* 15.44).

This brings us to a second reason Paul may have modestly worked with the default household structure: *survival*.<sup>4</sup> Paul knew well that slave conspiracies and revolts met gruesome fates, such as mass crucifixions. Tacitus recounts an occasion, under Nero, when the senatorial policy was reinstated that all the slaves of a household would be killed if a single slave murdered his master (*Ann.* 13.32.1).

A third factor pertains to the *legal* matters involved in a household. The *pater familias* of a household by law possessed *patria potestas*, legal responsibility for the management of his estate and all those within its ambit. He had to provide food and care for all, slave or free, and was expected to give “monetary allowances” to his clients and workers.<sup>5</sup> There would have been a state-required responsibility, then, for the father of the household to be the main authority, like the manager of a business. The state would not change this system just because a family decided to operate in a more egalitarian way, so it would be easy to see how Christian families were best served by adapting to the legally

supported household system rather than seeking to change or subvert it.

Finally, there is the matter of *relatability*. Obviously churches met in households, and when unbelievers were invited to a house church for a worship meeting, the guest would naturally observe the management of the household. First Corinthians 12:22–23 reminds us that Paul cared about what visitors to a church meeting thought about what was going on. Also, even later in Colossians, Paul warns them to act wisely toward outsiders (4:5).

Nevertheless, thematically, one should not miss the central *contribution* that Paul makes to the household-management *topos*—the rule or lordship of

Christ. [The Lordship of Christ in 3:18–4:1] All relationships in the Christian household are ultimately “managed” by the lord Jesus

#### The Lordship of Christ in 3:18–4:1



Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord (NIV 3:18)

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord (3:20)

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything . . . in the Lord (3:22)

Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ (3:23–24)

Christ, and everything happens “in Christ.” J. P. Hering refers to two axes that are affected by this rule—“divine-human” and “intra-human.” He points back to Colossians 1:4, where Paul commends the Colossians for their faith in Christ Jesus (divine-human axis) and their love for the saints (intra-human axis). This universal dominion of Christ, Hering urges, bears both grace and responsibility. The grace and mercy of Christ are evident in his redeeming love and self-sacrifice (see 1:15–20). He also places demands on all believers to live in their circumstances with personal integrity and single-minded concern for the community.<sup>6</sup>

[Transforming from Within]

### Transforming from Within



Ben Witherington explains Paul's intentions and purposes in the household codes in this way: “As is typical of Paul, the apostle begins with the audience where they are, and where they are—the *de facto* situation in the Greco-Roman world—is in a patriarchal society with a patriarchal household structure. What is striking about the way Paul deals with this structure is not how he promotes it, but how he seeks to modify it, to make it more in accord with Christian values.”

Witherington argues that Paul encouraged such Christian values as love and fairness in the household. He was seeking to transform the household from the inside out, “injecting the leaven of the gospel into the context of the Christian household, seeking to modify age-old practices and to mold them into a more Christ-like shape.”

See B. Witherington III, “Was Paul a Pro-Slavery Chauvinist? Making Sense of Paul's Seemingly Mixed Moral Messages,” *BRev* 20/2 (2004): 8, 44.

## COMMENTARY

### Wives and Husbands, 3:18–19

As mentioned above, Paul addresses household relationships in the three “groups” that are common to the household-management *topos* especially exemplified by Aristotle's political discourse: wives and husbands (3:18–19), children and fathers (3:20–21), and slaves and masters (3:22–4:1).

Paul begins with “wives” (*hai gynaikes*), who are called to submit (*hypotassesthe*) to their husbands. The language of submission implies a difference in terms of authority. Literally, the verb *hypotassō* means “to set in order under.” In the LXX, it is used in reference to subjection to the king (1 Chr 29:24), and also in the context of military authority (2 Macc 8:22). In Romans, Paul exhorts the believers to submit themselves to the governing authorities (13:1). Obviously, then, Paul is establishing a certain “order” within the households in Colossae where wives are to “organize” themselves under their husbands. This was a normal concept in the ancient world. As Dunn reminds us, “there were no traditions of liberal democracy in the world of the Roman Empire.”<sup>7</sup>



### Josephus and Philo on Wives' Inferiority and Servitude



The woman, says the law, is in all things inferior to the man. Let her accordingly be submissive, not for her humiliation, but that she may be directed, for the authority has been given by God to the man. (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.201, LCL)

Wives must be in servitude (*douleuō*) to their husbands, a servitude not imposed by violent ill-treatment, but promoting obedience in all things. (Philo, *Hypothetica* 7.3, LCL)

Paul avoids absolutist language in his code, neither referring to the inferiority of women nor to their responsibility to serve husbands like slaves (as *douleuō* implies for Philo).

Paul does not, however, rigidly parrot the same ideas present in pagan discussions of household management. Several unique elements here are critical. First, he addresses the subordinate party (in each case, including children and slaves) as a contributing member of the household. He does not simply tell husbands to overpower and dominate wives, but he tells both parties to “do their part,” so to speak, in the proper ordering of the household. Second, he uses the language of *submission* (*hypotassō*) for wives, and not *obedience* (*hypakouō*). [Josephus and Philo on Wives' Inferiority and Servitude]

Third, Paul uses the middle “voice” of the verb, implying that the action is one carried out by the person on himself or herself. As David Garland appropriately points out, the middle voice demonstrates that “the wife’s submission [is] her willing choice, not some universal law that ordains masculine dominance.”<sup>8</sup> Finally, the kind of submission that the wife should have is the kind that is “fitting in the Lord.” Why would a first-century wife not submit to her husband? There could be any number of reasons a wife might push back against the authority of her husband, but I think it is safe to assume that Paul has in mind especially reasons pertaining to the transcendent-ascetic philosophy. Perhaps some women thought they could live and act independently and even defiantly in the household because they were privy to special visions and ecstatic experiences. Paul would not consider this “fitting,” as it brings rivalry and tumult to the household, not harmony and order. It puffs up the self and does not build up the other.

When it comes to husbands (*hoi andres*), in 3:19a, his command is for them to love (*agapate*) their wives. No doubt the best of the Greco-Roman moralistic tradition would have encouraged husbands to practice the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, but Paul raises Christian husbands to his ultimate standard of *agapē*—love. In 3:14, he already referred to *agapē* as the highest virtue that guides patience, forgiveness, kindness, mercy, and humility (3:12-13).

It was not unheard of for philosophers to promote love [Pseudo-Phocylides on Love, Gentleness, and Care], but it should be clear that Paul’s model of love is the example of Christ, the same Christ who,

though he is lord of all, humbled himself to a shameful death on the cross for the sake of bringing reconciliation to sinful humans (Col 1:15-20; cf. Phil 2:5-11). While Paul does not undermine the traditional authoritative position of the husband over the wife, he “softens” the tendency in that culture for men to manage the household with a heavy hand; as he remarks in 3:19b, “do not be embittered against them” (NET). No doubt the kind of “love” Paul expects from husbands is exemplified in the well-known 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a passage: “Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”

Based on the radical other-ness of this exposition of love, scholars like I. H. Marshall call this kind of male-centered leadership “love-patriarchy,” a responsibility of the husband to embody these virtues of love. Marshall argues that Paul may have been reinforcing the patriarchal system of the Greco-Roman world (and traditional Judaism) to maintain a well-ordered household, but the “love” element would so transform the relationship that it could hardly be recognizable as a top-down authority.<sup>9</sup> “It is actually very difficult to see where a loving contemporary hierarchical husband would in practice insist on his own way over against the will of his wife. I suspect that in fact many husbands who are hierarchicalists in theory are virtually egalitarian in practice.”<sup>10</sup>

Before moving on to commands concerning children and parents, it is interesting to reflect on a point that Gordon Fee raises regarding the household situations in the Lycus valley. At the end of Colossians, Paul requests that his letter be read by the Laodiceans, including the household of Nympha (Col 4:15). The naming of a house church under the patronage of a woman was uncommon (cf. 1 Cor 1:16; 16:15; 2 Tim 4:19). Nevertheless, it is almost certainly implied that Nympha was the house church patroness and leader. Fee presumes that this means that the church was under her leadership, but she was probably single or a widow.

#### Pseudo-Phocylides on Love, Gentleness, and Care



Love your own wife, for what is sweeter and better than whenever a wife is kindly disposed toward (her) husband and a husband toward (his) wife. (195)

Do not be harsh with your children, but be gentle. And if a child offends against you, let the mother cut her son down to size. (205)

Provide your slave with the tribute he owes his stomach. Apportion to a slave what is appointed so that he will be as you wish. (223)

Do not brand (your) slave, thus insulting him. (225)

Ps. Phoc., see 175–227, “Marriage, Chastity, and Family Life.”



How would she hear Colossians 3:18–4:1? “[T]here would have been no husband to submit to, and she would have assumed the man’s role in the other relationships.”<sup>11</sup> What Fee means is that she would have been the *mater familias*, and when she heard the code, she probably would have had to adjust it such that *she* was taking on the male’s normal responsibilities for household affairs. Part of Fee’s point, I believe, is that there obviously would have been circumstances in households where adjustments were necessary. This should caution interpreters against presuming a kind of “universal household ethic” imposed by this passage.

### Children and Fathers, 3:20–21

After addressing husbands and wives, Paul turns to children and fathers in 3:20–21. Children (*ta tekna*) are exhorted to obey (*hypakouete*) their parents (*tois goneusin*) in all matters (3:20a). Beverly Gaventa observes, “The references to actual flesh-and-blood children who inhabit the Pauline communities are rare indeed. There is no clear reference to children themselves as believers although there are passages that suggest the presence of children in the communities.”<sup>12</sup> While there are references to households, we are not permitted a glimpse into what Paul thinks about children and childhood. Even in the Colossian household code, however, he appears to be reinforcing generally what is taught in Torah as well as the best of Greco-Roman attitudes toward parenting.

As for Paul’s Jewish upbringing, we can turn to the Decalogue, where honor for mother and father was demanded (Exod 20:12; cf. Deut 5:16), a teaching Jesus clearly supported (Matt 19:19). In Proverbs we read, “Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old” (NIV 23:22). Jewish sage Ben Sira calls his readers to honor mother and father, respecting the ones who brought you into the world: “Remember that it was of your parents you were born: how can you repay what they have given to you?” (Sir 7:27–28).

The Greeks and Romans shared similar household values. Suzanne Dixon explains the benefits a child brings to the household: “maintaining the [family] name, the religious rites, the general concept of continuity, family property, etc. . . .”<sup>13</sup> She explains that parents sometimes appreciated even the frivolity of childhood (“a delight in childish characteristics such as playfulness and childish speech patterns”), but parents generally praised chil-

dren who showed discipline, intelligence, and maturity.<sup>14</sup> The assumption that children would be obedient to parents not only facilitated the household order and management but was also bound up with family honor: “Roman sons and daughters literally bore the family name and could bring glory or discredit on it by their behavior.”<sup>15</sup>

Presumably modern Western readers imagine that Paul’s advice to “children in the household” is directed toward *young* children. That is because in places like twenty-first-century America, children “go off to college” as teenagers and do not tend to return to live in the household of their parents. In the ancient Roman world (and many societies even today), however, children stayed within their parents’ household much later, and sometimes there was no expectation or desire for independence or separation from parents, regardless of age or stage of life. This makes more sense of Paul addressing children in a letter read aloud in a church meeting. These “children” may actually be adults who fall under the authority of their fathers as managers of the household. If we are trying to *contextualize* the Colossian household code, then, we might hear Paul saying that, regardless of what kind of visions or spiritual experiences one might have, that does not qualify him or her to disregard the authority of the *pater familias*. Order and harmony must be a priority in the household.

The second part of 3:20(b) explains that such obedience is appropriate, “for this is pleasing in the Lord.” This adds another dimension beyond the teachings of, for example, Ben Sira above. Being obedient to parents is not just a noble repayment of their love and care; it is something in which God delights. The fact that Paul adds this piece of rationale means he is treating the children as thinking, active participants in the church and home, helping the household to function smoothly.

While children are told to obey, Paul also addresses the father—“do not provoke (*erithizete*) your children, or they may lose heart” (3:21). The fact of the matter is that we are not in a position to know much about parental habits and attitudes in the Roman world. As Dixon explains, “apart from odd pieces of recorded folklore, this has not survived as well as the prescriptive literature of philosophers and moralists.”<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, we do have a sense that threats of violence were not rarely issued against children, but much of this appears to involve discipline in education and, thus,

### Fatherly Consent of Punishment



Christian Laes recounts the words of a papyrus where a father consents to the beating of his son by the schoolmaster: “Go ahead, beat him, for he has not received a beating since leaving his father. I’m sure he would like a few blows. His bottom is used to it, and he needs his daily dose” (*Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten* 5, 7655).

See C. Laes, *Children in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 141.

at the hands of teachers and schoolmasters. [Fatherly Consent of Punishment] In fact, so common was this pedagogical disciplinary threat that Menander’s saying was well known and oft-repeated: “He who has never received a beating is uneducated.”<sup>17</sup>

The use of physical force was supported by Roman law, but with the proviso that such beating should not cause irreparable damage

(see Suetonius, *Otho* 2, 1). One way to reflect on this matter is to compare how the *pater familias* might punish his son versus his slave. While both children and slaves might receive the same kind of punishment (such as being beaten with rods), “*pietas* was regarded as a moral constraint on paternal punishment of children.”<sup>18</sup> Also, it appears that the *purposes* of punishments were different for children and slaves. Cicero remarks that children were chastised in order to learn obedience, but slaves were punished as a form of control (*Resp.* 3.25.37).<sup>19</sup>

It is in this context that we should hear Paul’s concern that fathers not aggravate (*erithizō*)—a verb that means “to stir up.” The *pater familias* should not provoke his children through mistreatment. Under persistent provocation, children will lose heart (*hina mē athymōsin*). The LXX uses this verb to represent the downcast and dispirited disposition of Hannah as she prayed year by year for a child to no avail (see 1 Sam 1:7). *Athymeō* is used when someone is worn down and driven to despondency (see Philo, *Gaius* 184).

### Slaves and Masters, 3:22–4:1

In the third section of the household code, Paul addresses slaves and masters. Slavery was prevalent in Roman households, and scholars estimate that, in the time of Paul, slaves made up 10 percent of the overall population, with the number increased to 20 to 30 percent in and around Rome.<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that slavery in the Roman world was not like slavery in America in the nineteenth century. People were not forced into slavery solely based on their ethnic origin. One became a slave through three possible means. First, one could be born into slavery. Second, it would happen if one were captured in war. Finally, someone might be forced into slavery as the result of a legal penalty.<sup>21</sup> Their services or



duties could be classified in these ways: household slaves, imperial and public slaves, slaves in urban crafts and services, agricultural slaves, and mining slaves.<sup>22</sup>

Slaves were considered property at the control and mercy of their masters. Nevertheless, there was considerable variance regarding the lifestyle, treatment, privileges, responsibility, and relative power given to a slave. Slaves could own other slaves. They could also be emancipated by their master: “Slaves were generally freed because of services they had rendered to their masters, or because of an associated feeling that a slave was too talented to be enslaved.”<sup>23</sup>

While they remained as slaves, though, they were at their masters’ mercy, and all too often they were treated cruelly and punished prematurely and severely. Jennifer Glancy repeats the indicative statement made by Richard Saller: “The lot of bad slaves was to be beaten and that of good slaves was to internalize the constant threat of a beating.”<sup>24</sup> While any one instance of such wanton brutality on the part of a master could be written off as a lack of self-control and decency, there was an institutional purpose for such treatment of slaves. There were so many slaves in Roman society that the Romans felt they needed to be controlled, lest a revolt create chaos and anarchy. [Pollio, His Slave, and the Lampreys] All sorts of methods were used to demean and control slaves, including branding. Gregory Aldrete refers to the practice of some masters who “outfitted their slaves with iron collars from which were hung tags inscribed with messages such as ‘If you find this slave, he has run away. Please return him to his owner at the following address.’”<sup>25</sup>

The Apostle Paul certainly would not have approved of torture or abuse toward slaves (see Phil 4:5). But neither would he have condoned violent slave rebellions. History tells us that slaves sometimes ran away (see above), but they also banded together and revolted, as in the famous case of Spartacus. Dillon and Garland note that other, less extreme forms of slave resistance included “laziness, sabotage and willful damage.”<sup>26</sup>

Paul promoted peace and harmony within the household. [Did Paul Condone Slavery?] In 3:22a he tells slaves in the church to obey (*hypakouete*) in every respect their *earthly* masters (*kata sarka kuriois*).

#### Pollio, His Slave, and the Lampreys



Publius Vedius Pollio, an official under Augustus, once had the pleasure of entertaining the emperor as a dinner guest. When Pollio’s slave accidentally dropped a crystal goblet, Pollio was so incensed that he ordered the slave to be thrown into a pool of flesh-eating lampreys. The slave was only spared thanks to Augustus’s clemency and despite Pollio’s intransigency. Indeed, in sympathy for the mistreated slave, Augustus ordered that all of Pollio’s crystal dishes and cups be dashed and that the lamprey pool be drained.

See Seneca, *On Anger* 3.40.

### Did Paul Condone Slavery?



In Colossians, Paul nowhere condemns the institution of slavery. Does he support and encourage it? Looking at texts like Col 3:11, he clearly has an egalitarian viewpoint toward the social status of slaves, but his primary concern is with the quality of relationships, not with the particular change in circumstance of a person (see 1 Cor 7:17–24). What that means is that Paul struggled with a tension between his vision of freedom and equality in light of new creation in Christ, and also the reality of life in a rigid social hierarchy in the Roman world around him. Probably for the same reasons he called wives to submit to their husbands and children to parents, he also tells slaves to obey their masters to promote order in the household.

Ralph Martin makes the further point that “Paul does not advocate a social philosophy that countenances revolution and violence. In the exigencies of the social structures of the Roman Empire of Paul’s day, slavery could be overthrown only by violent means; and the apostle will be no party to class hatred or violent methods (cf. Rom. 12:17–21).”

See R. P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon* (Interpretation; Louisville KY: WJK, 1991) 138.

### Ambrosiaster on Servant Obedience



“We are all obliged to fulfill our responsibilities in whatever situation or position we currently find ourselves in, so as to encourage the minds of unbelievers to worship God when they see that that is just and humble. Masters will see that their servants have improved and are more reliable in their services they render, and servants will experience the kindness of their masters.”

See G. L. Bray, ed. *Ambrosiaster: Commentaries on Galatians-Romans* (ACT; Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2009) 60.

The phrase *kata sarka*, literally “according to the flesh (e.g., what is human, earthly),” is a Pauline trademark (Rom 1:3; 4:1; 8:4–5, 12–13; 9:3, 5; 1 Cor 1:26; 10:18; 2 Cor 1:17; 5:16; 10:2–3; 11:18; Gal 4:23, 29). In this language, he appears to be referring to certain levels, planes, or dimensions. Flesh (*sarx*) can simply mean “physical” (1 Cor 10:18), but Paul also likes to juxtapose what is *kata sarx* with what is *kata pneuma* (according to the Spirit). This dichotomy tends to have a moral edge to it. The “flesh” is limited and leads people to live in selfish and petty ways (Rom 8:12–13). Perhaps Paul was referring to some earthly masters as those who govern their houses *kata sarka*—in a worldly way (see 2 Cor 11:18). Slaves should live, however, “fearing the [true] Lord [Jesus Christ]” (3:22c).

In calling for slave obedience, he refers to two potential cop-outs. Slaves should not

only be interested in “eye-service” (*ophthalmoudoulia*), a neologism that appears to mean service given to a master only as a show. As Lincoln suggests, if a slave is only interested in working hard when the master is looking, he or she may be cutting corners and neglecting responsibilities in the absence of the master.<sup>27</sup> Such work turns slaves into “people-pleasers” (*anthrōpareskoi*) where the sole purpose is to safeguard the master’s satisfaction of the work based on mere appearance—there is no serious interest in performing one’s work to the best of one’s abilities as an honest and obedient servant. [Ambrosiaster on Servant Obedience] For Paul, though, motive matters and the heart guides the will and body, so obedience must happen “with a sincere heart” (NET; *en aploṭēti kardias*).

In 3:23, Paul clarifies simply and plainly what he expects of all believers, no less slaves by legal status: “Whatever you do, work at it wholeheartedly (*ek psychēs*), as for the Lord and not mortals” (AT). Paul does not just give this command as a moral motivation speech; he also adds an eschatological encouragement and incen-

tive: “since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward” (3:24a). In 1:12 he had already referred to the believer’s preapproved qualification for the inheritance from God the Father given to believers. As Margaret MacDonald explains, in Paul’s day slaves typically were not allowed to inherit property. What we find in Colossians 3:24a, then, is a “reversal of cultural expectations,” as Paul transforms their status in the eyes of the Lord.<sup>28</sup> As Peter Garnsey aptly puts it, for Romans, “The great divider between slave and son is the capacity of the son to inherit.”<sup>29</sup>

Paul is saying that the patient endurance of the genuinely obedient slave will be rewarded by the Lord. The idea that this will happen *in the future* is a tacit confirmation that things are not the way they were meant to be. Paul gives the kind of advice he does because members of the household are often reacting to what they feel are injustices and inequities. The wrath of God is coming (3:6) precisely to make right what has gone wrong, to make the invisible visible, to expose evil works for what they are (and punish them), and to publicize the unassuming virtues of hard and honest work (for reward and recognition).

Paul adds, “You are working as a slave for the Lord Christ” (3:24b). This probably means two things to slaves. First of all, it reinforces that their *real* master is the one Lord Jesus Christ and not the earthly master who may not treat his household slaves and workers fairly. Second, it may also be a reminder that the Lord *Christ* knows what it is like to be treated like a slave (Phil 2:7) and to be cruelly beaten and condemned (1 Cor 2:8). After all, crucifixion itself was a punishment typically reserved for slaves, the lowest in society regarding status and human worth.<sup>30</sup> Paul’s point would be that slaves who knew their true Master to be the Lord Christ would have a compassionate *kyrios* who, far from being a spoiled, vindictive despot, could identify with the pain, sorrow, and shame of life at the bottom of society.

When it comes time for judgment, God will not look at the brandings of a slave, the information on his iron collar, or his or her empty pocket. Neither will God recognize the social status of a free man and master. Rather, “the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality” (3:25). This is reminiscent of 3:6, where Paul warns of the coming wrath (*orgē*) of God against those who are disobedient.



### The Consequences of Roman Slave Resistance



Paul was obviously teaching believers Christ-like virtues (see Col 3:12), but his encouragement that slaves treat their masters well may also have been practical and apologetic. There are stories of slave rebellions that did not tend to end well. The Roman state was not merciful toward defiant slaves. Tacitus tells the story of a debate in the Senate regarding the murder of prominent senator and urban prefect Pedanius Secundus. He was killed by one of his household slaves. This slave may have murdered him because the master refused to free the slave, or perhaps they shared the same lover.

By law, all the remaining slaves of the household were to be executed. Indeed, many citizens called for just such a punishment so as to maintain civility and order and to reinforce the household system of authority. The senate approved this penalty, and 400 slaves under this one household were put to death.

No doubt Paul tried to discern when to fight the system and when to “fly under the radar,” so to speak. Rather than expose the church to accusations of sedition and mutiny, he encouraged the same virtues of Jesus himself who, according to 1 Pet 2:23, “did not return abuse” when reviled, but “entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.”

See Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.42-3.

The statement in 3:25 that God shows no partiality (*prosōpolēmpsia*), that God does not play favorites, is a key theme in Romans as well. In Romans 2:11, Paul reminds his readers that neither Jews nor Gentiles are treated as more special than the other. In Colossians, the same goes for masters and slaves. This would have been a rather radical view because people like Aristotle put so much emphasis on the slaving being inferior *by nature*.

In Colossians 3:11, Paul already explained that in the new act of God’s creative redemption, “slave” and “free” are not value-laden categories. If Christ is in any person, he or she cannot be inferior to anyone else. Thus, not only should each one be treated *as equal*, but also masters will not be extended special treatment simply because of *their* privilege in society. No wrongs (*adikōn*) will be swept under the carpet on account of status or power. All acts of injustice will be exposed and dealt with. Practically speaking, a slave need not take matters into his or her own hands, because such should be left up to the Master of the masters. [The Consequences of Roman Slave Resistance]

Finally, in 4:1, Paul turns to address masters (*kyrioi*). He calls them to extend to their slaves both just treatment (*dikaioi*) and equal treatment (*isotētos*). He gives a particular rationale for this fair-minded attitude: “for you know that you also have a Master (*kyrios*) in heaven.” The underlying principle here is similar to Jesus’ Parable of the Unforgiving Slave (Matt 18:23-35)—*how can you expect compassion and pity from your master when you refuse to show mercy to your own slave* (Matt 18:27, 32-35)? That is to put it negatively. To conceive of it more positively, human masters must remember such grace and love extended to them through Christ the Lord and show the same kind of benevolence and goodwill toward those under their charge, including slaves. In Philippians 4:5, Paul tells them that their gentleness should be known by everyone, and in Colossians 4:1 it is specifically directed toward the least loved and valued members of Roman society—slaves. It was

### Seneca's Discourse on Slavery



Seneca the Younger wrote a series of letters to Roman procurator of Sicily Lucilius. In letter 47, Seneca discusses the travesties of slave abuse. He shows abhorrence that they are not treated as real human beings and mentions the horror of the master getting fat on his fine dining while slaves stand in ready service, silent and hungry around him all night (47.2-3).

He pities the slave boys who are forced to pleasure masters sexually: "he is kept beardless by having his hair smoothed away or plucked out by the roots, and he must remain awake throughout the night, dividing his time between his master's drunkenness and his lust" (47.7).

Seneca appeals to the universal brotherhood of humanity in his statements. A slave shares with masters the same stock, the same sky above, and, like anyone else, "breathes, lives, and dies" (47.10).

One of Seneca's key arguments for showing kindness to slaves is not unlike Paul's point. Seneca encourages masters even to treat slaves as they would want to be treated by

their own superiors. What if you have no master? "You are till young," Seneca retorts, "perhaps you will have one." He gives the examples of Hecuba, Croesus, Plato, and Diogenes entering into captivity or indentured service (47.12).

His final point is that men should not be judged on the basis of their slave status: "Accident assigns duties" (47.15). Rather, one should value someone based on his character. After all, everyone is a slave in some way, whether to lust or greed or fear—or perhaps "an old hag" (47.17). The question is not whether a man is a slave or free; it is whether his soul is free. If you honor the good character of a slave, he will respect you. Seneca explicitly does not mean that slaves should not be slaves. Rather, he wishes to restore the kind of master-slave relationship that existed in earlier generations—in the good old days.

How should a master treat his slave? "Associate with your slave on kindly, even on affable, terms; let him talk with you, plan with you, live with you" (47.13).

See Seneca, *Epistles* 1-65, LCL, trans. R. M. Gummere.

easy for masters to treat slaves as subhuman. While Ben Sira commends the hardworking slave and discourages masters from abusing the diligent and skilled (Sir 7:20-21), he still finds torture to be an effective method of discipline for lazy or unruly slaves (33:25-27). Also, the motivation for Ben Sira's kindness is largely pragmatic: "If you have but one slave, treat him like yourself . . . treat him like a brother, for you will need him as you need your life" (33:25).

Certainly there were *some* public voices issuing concerns about the miserable plight of the abused slave and advocating for fairness and justice. [Seneca's Discourse on Slavery] Paul, however, completely destabilized the "natural" order with his claim of equality (3:11) and his support of slaves like Onesimus. N. T. Wright summarizes well how Paul addressed the plight of slaves in his own day:

Paul does not protest against the institution of slavery. That would be about as useful, for him, as a modern preacher fulminating against the internal combustion engine. His approach is subtler. He found a fixed point on which to stand, from which to move the world: slaves too are human beings with rights. To talk of "justice" and "fairness" (properly the word means "equality") in relation to slaves would sound extraordinary to most slave-owners of the ancient world.<sup>31</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

**The Hermeneutics of Application: The Case Study of Women in Marriage, 3:18-19**

The NT household codes offer some of the most challenging texts to relate to Christian faith and community life today. More than most other texts, the hermeneutical issues involved are extremely complex. *Is Paul making a case for all women of all time to submit to their husbands? What is the Biblical view of gender and the appropriate relationships between men and women? How does this relate to Paul's statements towards slaves?*

Before addressing specifically how to apply the Colossian household code for the church today, we must reflect on how to approach the hermeneutical dimension of “hearing” this text today. There appear to be three noteworthy hermeneutical perspectives on applying this kind of scriptural text. We might refer to them as (a) direct/universal, (b) redemptive-progressive, and (c) eschatological-improvisational.

The first model is, perhaps, the traditional one—the one presumed throughout most of the interpretations during the last 2,000 years. This interpretive framework treats the commands in 3:18–4:1 as direct (application) and universal (in relevance to all times and all people). Thus, when it comes to marital relationships, the patriarchal perspective is standard. This approach is represented by Richard Melick, Jr., who makes the following statement about husband and wife in Colossians 3:18-19:

Paul's message was that whenever these relationships exist, the people in them are expected to act as Paul commanded through the Spirit of God. When servants are servants (and masters are masters), these guidelines pertain. When children are children (and parents are parents), these guidelines remain. Likewise, when a woman is a wife (and a man is a husband), this is the order God expects.<sup>32</sup>

Melick defends this by pointing to other Pauline texts that call for the submission of wives or the unique authority of husbands (e.g., he notes 1 Cor 11:2-16). Thus, Melick believes that the command for wives to submit is directly relevant to today and universal because such relationships do in fact exist in our time. While Melick tries to handle this matter with cultural sensitivity, there is



one major problem with trying to make the household code universal—*what about slavery?* In fact, he inevitably admits that “when servants are servants (and masters are masters), these guidelines pertain.” Many interpreters would find this approach a bit too static—does Scripture at all call for the abolition of slavery? How does this work hermeneutically?

On the opposite end of the spectrum of the direct/universal approach is one where the commands of Scripture are seen as contextual and often limited, but the modern church can learn from an eschatological power behind the perspective that is shared by Paul. This approach is *eschatological* insofar as it sees something radical happening in Scripture, even though the focus is not on a “direct” sort of application to prohibitions and commands that were aimed at people and situations of the ancient world. Rather, one must look at the demand of the eschatological reality of the death and resurrection of Christ through the Spirit as a calling to obey Christ in our own time. One might call this “improvisational” because it means that the modern church is guided by the light of Scripture, but we do not mimic what the ancient church did (which was specific to its own time and culture). This approach is modeled by Suzanne Watts Henderson, especially in her article, “Taking Liberties with the Text: the Colossian Household Code as Hermeneutical Paradigm.”<sup>33</sup> Rather than read Colossians 3:18–4:1 as a direct and universal “code” for marital relationships, she takes a cue from Richard Hays, who views Paul himself as one who read his Bible in light of “a certain imaginative vision of the relation between Scripture and God’s eschatological activity in the present time.” So Henderson develops this further in terms of modern scriptural application by asking how we might capture today the “imaginative vision” of Colossians 3:18–4:1. For Henderson, it is *not* with wives submitted to husbands but with a broader appeal to obedience to God.

She believes that taking the text seriously as Scripture means attentiveness to “the text’s impulse to redefine prevailing social attitudes in light of the Christian faith by framing all domestic concerns within the lordship of Christ. Those who dismiss this passage as selling out to a hierarchical worldview—and abandoning the Christian movement’s earlier egalitarian thrust—have failed to take seriously the radical nature of the ‘new life in Christ’ the writer intends to inculcate.”<sup>34</sup> Henderson believes that the code (as part

of Scripture) has a message for today, but not about wives submitting to husbands. It is about how relationships in the household, still a microcosm of society, need to be re-envisioned in light of “new life in Christ.”

So, in summary, Melick treats the household code as Scripture where the specific commands should be obeyed by all Christians everywhere and in all cultures. Henderson considers Colossians 3:18–4:1 “Scripture” but does not apply this Scripture directly as commands to obey. Rather, she looks at the “vision” of the text more broadly in terms of obeying Christ in all relationships.

Between these two extremes is what I call the “redemptive-progressive” approach to Scripture. This view notes that, generally speaking, there are many commands in Scripture that are normative for all peoples in all times, but sometimes this is not the case, especially when we see a movement within the wider narrative of Scripture that points toward some kind of divine ideal. This model is worked out in detail by William Webb in his book *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals*. Webb argues that, in cases like the roles of slaves and women in society, while we do not see the people of God living out an “ultimate ethic” (the ideal way of living that God finally desires), we can see the trajectory toward equality through canonical development in Scripture. We also can sense the “redemptive spirit” of a biblical social ethic by comparing how the church is called to behave in view of the surrounding culture.

[F. F. Bruce on Paul and Women]

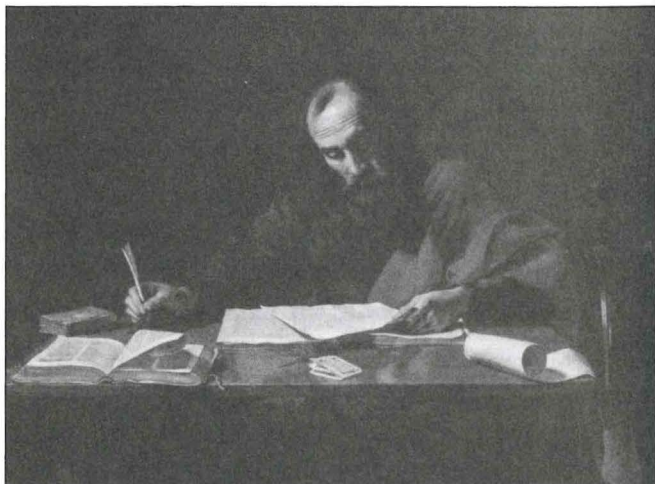
### F. F. Bruce on Paul and Women

 Scot McKnight recounts his own journey toward understanding what Scripture has to say about women in leadership in his book *The Blue Parakeet*. During his doctoral studies in the UK, McKnight jumped at the opportunity to have tea with evangelical scholar F. F. Bruce. During their visit together, McKnight asked Bruce, “What do you think of women’s ordination?” Bruce replied, “I don’t think the New Testament talks about ordination.”

McKnight inquired again, “What about the silencing passages of Paul on women?” Bruce responded, “I think Paul would roll over in his grave if he knew we were turning his letters into *torah*.”

See S. McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2008) 206–207.

Valentin de Boulogne (?) (1591–1632). *Saint Paul Writing His Epistles*. Oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston TX.  
(Credit: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Probably\\_Valentin\\_de\\_Boulogne\\_-\\_Saint\\_Paul\\_Writing\\_His\\_Epistles\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Probably_Valentin_de_Boulogne_-_Saint_Paul_Writing_His_Epistles_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg))



Webb notes that we have, within the biblical text, teaching and guidance from the Lord that is “written within a cultural framework with limited moves towards an ultimate ethic.”<sup>35</sup> I believe that Webb’s sophisticated hermeneutical model presented in his book is cogent and sensible; thus I will go into further detail about how he develops his argument that there *is* development toward an ethic of gender equality in Scripture.

A key for Webb’s model is the appearance of any “seed statements,” expressions within Scripture that “suggest and encourage further movement on a particular subject.”<sup>36</sup> He considers Galatians 3:28 such a text. While the question to what degree Paul’s statement to the Galatians should affect *social relationships* (versus being merely a statement about equality in salvation) is a matter of debate, but I believe that Webb draws the right implications from the fact that male/female is set alongside Jew/Gentile and, as for the latter pairing, Paul certainly pushed for social equality.

Another key consideration for Webb is “Breakouts”—moments in Scripture where we see a deviation from a cultural norm by a (positive) person or character. We find many examples where women show competence in authoritative roles, including Deborah, Huldah, Priscilla, and Junia.

A final key matter that Webb deals with regards whether or not woman’s subordination has to do with a hierarchal relationship by virtue of creation or the fall/curse. If man’s authoritative leadership derives from God’s own mandate and establishment, then there is no reason to believe that there is any development in Scripture toward a kind of equality that would undermine that. On the other hand, if men and women were created to share leadership equally in partnership, then any attempts to subdue or subordinate the other would be a sinful maneuver, and one could make an argument for movement toward equality throughout Scripture. Again, I believe Webb (and others) have argued persuasively that there are multiple ways to read and interpret the creation narratives, and he is able to counter patriarchal interpretations convincingly.

One key point that Webb makes in his final reflections in his book deals with the inherent challenge of how far to read the trajectory past Scripture. When it comes to relationships between women and men, does the redemptive arc push all the way to pure equality, or is the final ethic still a kind of patriarchy? While Webb himself leans more toward pure equality, he leaves open the possi-



bility of the latter option. He is quick to stress, though, that such a type of patriarchy should not be demanding or harsh, but moderate and benevolent. Thus, he refers to this as “ultra-soft patriarchy,” a husband-weighted authority that “minimizes the liabilities of patriarchy as much as possible while keeping a measure of greater deference and honor.”<sup>37</sup>

As you might guess, I am not at all convinced that the demand from Scripture is that women in all times and places should submit to their husbands’ higher authority. It is extremely difficult to maintain a sensible rationale for this theologically. Either women are treated as intellectually inferior to men in decision-making,<sup>38</sup> or else there is just *no* rationale and it is simply “the way things are.” When there is no rationale (or a weak one), however, exceptions could proliferate: what if the husband is mentally handicapped? What if he is simply far less educated? In such situations, I believe a clear basis is necessary. Texts like Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11 lead me to believe that no rationale exists, so the demand for subordination of wives is not absolute. Thus, we might wonder, *what does this text (3:18–4:1) mean to me now?*

Given the emphasis on behavior oriented toward “the Lord [Jesus],” the lasting message of the household code is that the home should be a place where Christ reigns centrally and clearly. Too many pastors, church leaders, and ostensible disciples lead two lives—their public lives as ministers, missionaries, elders, and deacons, and their private lives where selfish attitudes and decisions too easily rule. The message is simple to repeat but difficult to obey—Christ must be the lord of the household, the one to whom each household member (whatever role given) is accountable. He sees all hidden behaviors, whether the endless good deeds that the spouse or children don’t notice or the concealed misbehaviors, such as hiding purchases of which the other household members would not approve.

There is also an apologetic element here. How will unbelievers find Christianity attractive if a key context of our life, our household, is a sham? If we don’t invest in our marriages or good parenting, what are we communicating about our concern for the well-being of our families? When pastors work sixty-hour weeks and rarely see spouse and children, what priorities are being set? When Christ comes to the center of the household, things change. Each member wants to please the Lord with his or her behavior, so all relationships are strengthened.

## NOTES

1. See D. Balch's now classic study, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Chico CA: Scholars Press, 1981).
2. C. Osiek and D. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville KY: WJK, 1997) 84.
3. James D. G. Dunn, "The Household Rules in the New Testament," in *The Family in Theological Perspective* (ed. S. C. Barton; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996) 43–63, at 67.
4. See Dunn, "Household Rules," 61.
5. See L. Michael White, "Paul and *Pater Familias*," in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook* (ed. P. Sampley; Harrisburg PA: TPI, 2003) 457–87, at 458.
6. See J. P. Hering, *The Colossian and Ephesian Haustafeln in Theological Context: An Analysis of Their Origins, Relationship, and Message* (AUSS 7; New York: Lang, 2007) 63–64.
7. Dunn, "Household Rules," 61.
8. D. E. Garland, *Colossians, Philemon* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2009) 244.
9. I. H. Marshall, "Mutual Love and Submission in a Marriage: Colossians 3:18-19 and Ephesians 5:21-23," in *Discovering Biblical Equality* (ed. R. W. Pierce and R. M. Groothuis; Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2004) 186–204.
10. Marshall, "Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage," 194.
11. See G. D. Fee, "Hermeneutics and the Gender Debate," in *Discovering Biblical Equality* (ed. R. W. Pierce and R. M. Groothuis; Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2004) 375.
12. B. R. Gaventa, "Finding a Place for Children in the Letters of Paul," in *The Child in the Bible* (ed. M. J. Bunge; Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2008) 233–77, at 234.
13. S. Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) 102.
14. *Ibid.*, 107.
15. *Ibid.*, 110.
16. *Ibid.*, 116.
17. See C. Laes, *Children in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 141.
18. R. P. Saller, *Patriarchy, Property, and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 147.
19. See G. G. Fagan, "Punishment," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece & Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 1.69.
20. See S. R. Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 8.
21. See R. Alston, *Aspects of Roman History, AD 14–117* (New York: Routledge, 1998) 155.
22. See P. Hunt, "Slavery," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece & Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 323.
23. M. Dillon and L. Garland, *Ancient Rome* (New York: Routledge, 2005) 329.

24. See J. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 116.

25. G. S. Aldrete, *Daily Life in the Roman City: Rome, Pompeii, and Ostia* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2004) 67.

26. Dillon and Garland, *Ancient Rome*, 322.

27. See A. T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC 42; Dallas TX: Word, 1990) 421.

28. M. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians* (SP; Collegeville MN: Liturgical, 2000) 158; cf. N. T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon* (TNTC; Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1986) 150.

29. P. Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 182. So also C. Laes, "[Slaves] had no rights whatsoever: they could not inherit, own possessions, marry or officially recognize their offspring" (*Children in the Roman Empire*, 155).

30. See M. Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia MN: Fortress, 1977) 52.

31. Wright, *Colossians*, 150–51.

32. Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (NAC, vol. 32; Nashville TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001) 310.

33. S. W. Henderson, "Taking Liberties with the Text: The Colossians Household Code as Hermeneutical Paradigm," *Interpretation* 60/4 (2006): 420–32.

34. *Ibid.*, 422.

35. W. J. Webb, *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals* (Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2001) 30.

36. *Ibid.*, 83.

37. *Ibid.*, 242.

38. Alan Padgett notes that this was the default theological position until rather recently in history. Most scholars and pastors today, though, avoid such conclusions; see *As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 2011). Someone like Mark Driscoll, however, would be an example of a person who defends the view that women should not be in church leadership because they are "more gullible and easier to deceive than men." See Driscoll's *Church Leadership: Explaining the Roles of Jesus, Elders, Deacons, and Members at Mars Hill* (Seattle WA: Mars Hill Church, 2004).