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Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke
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Colossians 3:18-4:1 NIV:

18 Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. **19** Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. **20** Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. **21** Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. **22** Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. **23** Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, **24** since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. **25** Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism. **4 1** Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Let's open our Bibles! Let's do something fun! Colossians, the third chapter -- and we're going to take it to the end, even into 4:1. So -- we have a friend, and -- hang with me. You're gonna think I've lost my friend, but -- I haven't. We have a friend who's forever saying, "Oh, you know, that's karma." And she's using "karma" for everything. And her kind of fundamental belief is that, you know, what you do comes back to you. And it kind of, you know -- one time she was saying -- oh, it's been a long time, she goes, "Mark, you believe in karma?" And it's like -- "No! You know I'm a pastor," it's like -- what do you think? I mean -- no! And then I said -- "But I do believe in some principles that are really kind of close to what you're saying." Karma -- you know -- Compton's says that karma is "the totality of a person's actions in any one of the successive stages of that person's existence, the thought determining the fate of the next stage." And so, karma simply says I don't do certain things because I don't want it to negatively affect me in the next incarnation that I take on. That's why a person who really believes in reincarnation and karma says, "I don't wanna do something bad, or I'll be a lizard in my next life." Or, you know, I mean, Duck fans say, "I'll be a Beaver in my next life, and have to lose all the time." I mean, some crazy thing. Well -- the reality is, there is a sense of which we believe -- not in karma, but there are a number of principles -- we call them, maybe, the "laws of the harvest" -- and that is, you reap what you sow. Yeah, we do believe in that. And it sounds a little bit like that. Or, you reap in kind to what you sow. You who are "ag folks", you who are farmers know that you have never in your life planted an apple tree and got blueberries off of it. It doesn't happen! I mean, you may have made a mistake, but the fact is, if you have a peach tree and you plant that seedling, it's going to grow peaches -- every time! Why? It's the laws of the harvest, because we reap in kind to what we sow.

So therefore, there is a sense of which we do believe in this one principle, and it comes out in this text -- what you do comes back to you. It's true. Look at verse 25 of this text -- kind of towards the end of it, but go there for a moment -- and it says, "Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong. And there's no favoritism." By the way, who's making good on that promise in this text? God is. God's the one who's saying, "My friend, you aren't gonna get away with this! You just aren't." There's the principle in life -- what you do comes back to you. And by the way, it states it here in the negative, but it's also true in the positive. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong. There's no favoritism. In other words, God's not going to go, "Oh, well. I was just kidding." But it's also in the positive. Anyone who does good -- what? It's gonna come back to you. Now, this is a nice principle to live by, right? Oh, that's cool. Ah -- until you apply it to the two places that God wants you to apply it to tonight. See, this little verse is not just sitting in there by itself. It's not just this, you know, stand-alone text that you can rip out and say, "Ah, here's the message. What you do comes back to you." That's true. Absolutely true. In what areas? Two that he talks about. The family and your work. Let's go back up to verse 18. What you do comes back to you. "Wives, submit to your husbands. It's fitting to the Lord." Because what you do comes back to you. "Husbands, love your wife. And do not embitter them, or be harsh with them." Don't take up a bitter

spirit with them. Why? Because what you do comes back to you. "Children, I want you to obey your parents." In everything, by the way. Not just the things you like, not just when you're happy, not when you're just getting your way -- in everything. "For this pleases the Lord." I know -- I've got a parent going, "Time out -- I'm going to get my kid from Sunday School -- or Saturday School, whatever we call it, it's Saturday -- and they're coming in here!" "Fathers" -- and by the way, in Hebrews, this word is translated "parents" so I'm going to use that term -- "Parents, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged." Now, all of this is the prelude for what? What you do will come back to you. Your family life. God has not called you to submit to His instruction as a suggestion, but rather, as a pattern for a Christian family. He's not putting this in here because, well, you know, let me just give you some thoughts for -- no. There's a way to live your life. Wives, there's a way to live your life. Husbands. Children -- there's a way to live that you look to your parents and authority, and dads and moms, there's a way that you lead your children, and when you do, it will come back to you, and it will be a great blessing. It's not a threat, but it is a promise. Anyone who does wrong is going to reap the consequences of those choices. It's true.

God's called you to submit to His instruction and pattern. Why? Because it works. There's a blueprint of which your entire marriage and family was built, and it's not that God put this together and said, "Well, try this" -- no, He said, "Let us make mankind IN OUR IMAGE. In the image of God He created them, husband and wife." The blueprint of the marriage is not some socioeconomic cultural context. It's not something that is derived for the continuance of people through birth of children. That's not the point at all. God didn't put that in Genesis 1:26 and 27. He said, "Let us create mankind in our image, in the image of God He created them, male and female, husband and wife." In other words, the pattern, the context or the rationale for what marriage looks like is not for reproductive services, and it's not driven culturally at all. It's driven divinely. And God says, what you do will come back to you. God's called us to submit. And so, He says to wives, "Wives, I want you to submit to your husbands." Now, Paul's writing to a culture where women couldn't vote. Women couldn't even inherit their husband's property if he died. Where did the property and all the assets go? Went to the oldest son. She couldn't even receive that property. Husbands could have as many wives, within reason, as long as they could take care of them. Wives, you could only have one husband. There was a complete imbalance, so the question should come to us -- why would Paul ever say to a woman, "Submit to your husband" when economically, culturally, everything about it -- she had to? Well, there's a key in the grammar. There's what we call a "middle voice" in Greek, and it's the voice that says, "Do this yourself. Not submit because you have to. Not submit because you're made to." It's in the middle voice -- in other words, "You, yourself submit." It's critical. Because there's nothing worse than a person who says, "I am standing on the outside but I'm sitting on the inside." In other words -- "I'm standing to honor you, but on the inside I am rebelling." That's not Paul's point. That's not God's point at all. He says to ladies, "What I'd like you to do is, I'd like you to come under your husband." What image do we have? What picture do we have? Christ to the Father.

You see, if your marriage, and I believe that it is, is built upon the blueprint of the triune God, then ladies, your best model for submission is the Lord Jesus Christ. When He came to the Father and said, "Not my will, but Thine be done," when He came to the Father, "I have spoken that which He has given to me" -- never do you ever see Christ being devalued, never do you see Christ being a second-class citizen to the triune God -- what you see is Christ fulfilling His glorious, majestic, and victorious role under what? The submission to the Father. "Wives, relate to your husbands the way Christ is related to the Father." I Corinthians 11. Genesis 1. Are you losing your identity in that point? No, not at all -- you're gaining it. Like Christ gained His perfect role in the triune God had you in relation to your husband as you come under his strength, as you respect him. "As is fitting in the Lord." As it fits together in the Lord. As it honors the Lord. That's where you're going to find your greatest freedom. That's where you're going to find your greatest capacity to serve God in the way He created you. He didn't design this to suppress you. It's not subjugation. Subjugation is the idea that you're a mere object that needs to lose your identity and come under the authority of a man. That couldn't be farther from the truth. Again, your best model is Christ. He was never subjugated to the Father. He was never trampled on by the Father. In fact, the Father says, "I will see to it that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Go back and look at that in

Philippians chapter two. It's the Father who says, "I will do that." And when a wife comes, and she submits, and she recognizes the position that her husband has in the Lord, and she recognizes her willing surrender under his strength. Are there limitations to that? Of course there are. If your husband is abusive, that doesn't mean you stay in the house at that moment. If your husband's selling cocaine out the back door, and your kids and you are at risk, you need to call for some help. If your husband's disobedient to God and is asking you to participate in things that are dishonoring to God and clearly disobedient to Scripture, God gives you absolute direction that you are to obey God in that moment and not your husband.

But let's not presume the worst. Let's presume where most of you are at. Your husband's a great guy, and he needs you to honor God. Why? Because what you do comes back to you. Husbands, I want you to love your wives. Yes, He uses the term -- it's a significant term -- it's a term that means to sacrifice your life. That's the term that He uses. The term is "agape." It's a sacrificial love. It's a love where He comes and gives His life just like Christ gave His life for us. I'm not an expert in this. I just have 34 years of pastoral ministry. I have never ever seen a woman struggle with submission when she's married to a man who lives the way Christ lives with the church. Never seen it! I've never seen a woman who balks at the idea of coming and submitting and respecting her husband when he loves her the way Christ loves us. I've never seen it in my life. I've seen plenty of ladies who struggle submitting to their husbands because the husband's -- well, let's just say he's not honoring Christ at all. What does it look like? It's the measure of a man's love, not so much in the words that he uses. Those are important, yes, but it's his actions. How did Christ love the church? He died for it. How did Christ love the church? He prays for it. He's sitting at the right hand of the Father right now, praying every day for you. He died for, He prays for, He provides for her. He leads her. Husbands, let's take that one. Let's utilize the strength we've been given, let's utilize the power we've been given, let's utilize the resources we've been given. To do what? To lay them down for the benefit of our wives. Let's sacrifice for them. Let's pray for them. Let's provide well for them. And let's lead them -- not coerce them. Not force them. But lead them. With the kind of gentle, patient love that Christ leads you and me. Why? What you do will come back to you.

"Children," he says -- oh, yes. What do we do? We obey our parents. We're in kind of a tragic era, I think. We're in the era where we want to celebrate what the rights are of children. I'd like to see us talk more about the responsibilities of kids. I'd like to see parents not mean-spirited, not coercive, not brow-beating them, but actually expect their kids to obey them. Why? Because, if you learn to obey your parents, you will succeed in this world. You will. Some of you saw the mid-week where I interviewed a couple of our vets -- heroes to us. And I remember Will talking about, one of the things he learned -- and I think he learned them more than just in the military. He says, "I learned respect and obedience." And when we were talking later, I said, "How did that serve you?" He says, "Wherever I went, I respected those who led me, and people found it easy to lead me." Can you imagine if your boss said that? "It is easy to lead you because of how obedient and respectful you are." Where do you learn that? At home. Where do you learn that? With mom and dad. What benefit is it? You'll be one of the best employees that anyone's ever had. You'll be the kind of person that people fight for. You'll be the kind of person that if managers are selected, they will choose you. Why? Because there's nothing better than to lead a person who knows how to respect authority. That's why Paul said, "Children, obey your parents." Because that's where you learn the success of respect and authority. And parents -- don't embitter your kids. What does it mean to embitter them? It's to take hope away from them. It's to take all hope and delight away from them and to make them individuals who hate life.

How do parents do that? Well, they do that by expectations that can never be met. They do it by changing expectations because the parent doesn't have any rudder that guides them. They do it by unfairness. They do it by treating one very, very kind and another sibling, another child, they treat with disdain. They do it by a lack of consistency where the child never knows what they get when they come home. Parent -- don't embitter your kids. Why? Because what you do will come back to you. You see, if you take even just this simple text, and you say, "We're gonna do this in our family. To the best of our ability, we're gonna do this" -- what's the benefit? A strong family. Respecting kids. Kids that love mom and dad, respect mom and dad. A marriage that is solid and secure so the

kids don't come home wondering on any given day if dad and mom are still going to be together. You realize the incredible strength and security that comes when the kids know mom and dad are absolutely committed to each other and are never, ever going to consider divorce? Do you realize how many kids, including mine, came home at some point in their life, and asked their mom, "Mom, you ever gonna divorce dad?" "Jacob, why would you ask that?" "Because I was sitting at lunch today, and every kid at my table's parents are divorced. Just wondered if it was gonna happen to you." She looks at me -- "Divorce? No. Murder? Yes." For some reason that delighted him. What you do comes back to you.

Let's move quickly to work. What does he tell us? Well, he moves to an area that we might have a little difficulty with. He says, "Slaves" -- ha! Well, most of you -- I know, there's all kinds of jokes. "Yeah, I'm a slave at my" -- no, you're not. Not at all. But we are, most of us, employees. Some of you own businesses, and so, we'll be speaking to you in just a minute, but the reality is, most of us work for somebody, so we have that relationship of having people over us. What does he tell us to do? Well, he says, "I want you to live and work with integrity. Obey your earthly masters in everything, and do it, not only when their eye is on you to win their favor, but with sincerity and integrity of heart and reverence for the Lord." In other words, be the kind of employee that whether your manager is watching you or not, you do exactly the same thing. You work hard. You work hard!

There was a young man who worked for a software company. His name was Daniel. When he went to work for the company, he really didn't have -- he didn't have a degree in computer science and he didn't have a strong background, but what he had was a phenomenal work ethic, and nowadays -- with exceptions, certainly. You know, if you're not an engineer, you're not gonna go build bridges with a good work ethic. At least, I hope not. But -- Daniel went to work for this software company. Fifty people worked for this company. Fifty. And inside of a year, he was a vice president. One day somebody was asking the boss, "How does a guy in your company become vice president in one year?" This is what he said. "We have 50 people here. It amazes me what I have to ask some employees to do. Sometimes I have to ask them to be here on time. I don't know why, but I do. I have to tell them to dress appropriately. I literally have to have a dress code for seasons. Or, I have to tell them, 'Please don't make personal phone calls throughout the day. Stay off the computer, especially social media, because you're excelling at mediocrity.' Why is Daniel the vice president? Because I never had to tell him to show up at work on time. I'd never catch him on his personal phone making all kinds of phone calls to friends. I'd never see him check his Facebook throughout the day. His phone goes into his pocket. He checks it at his lunch and at his break. And in a year, he learned enough to lead 50 people." Why? What you do comes back to you. Probably other than introducing me to Jesus, one of the sweetest gifts my mom gave me was a love of work. I didn't know what it meant to have one job. My mom always had three jobs, her entire life raising us kids. And you know what? She never complained. She never said, "Ah, I gotta go do this job so I can feed you, you big hungry ape!" She just went to work. She'd work in the evenings typing when I was, you know, playing ball or doing something else. She just worked. Why? Because, that's what she felt was God's calling to do. She gave that to me. One of the sweetest gifts she gave me.

Do your job with integrity. Why? Because what you do comes back to you. And for those of you who are in management -- "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord." "Masters" -- this one's for you -- employers, managers -- that's who he's talking to. "Provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you have a Master in heaven." You know what? If people would have obeyed this, we would not have unions today. That's my belief. I'm not against them. At some fundamental level. There's some problems with them, and it depends on all the things that they do, but here's the reality -- you go back and look at labor in the United States, and we had people who needed to fight for a six-day work week so that they didn't have to work seven days a week. We had to go back and fight for sick leave, because some people would lose their job if they stayed home and they got injured, and they had another person to hire and you'd lose your job. A lot of the labor issues, sometimes as a manager, they're cumbersome and frustrating, but the reality is, most of them you can probably

trace back to abuse. The abuse sometimes that managers or business owners did when they -- what? Had leverage over people. And God says in this text, "Do what is right and fair." Why? Don't ever forget you have a master over you. What a sober thing. It is. But it's not something that's harsh, it's something that's delightful. Treat the people who work with you, for you, for those of you who are wonderful business owners -- and we need them. We need tons of people like you. Or people even that are above you. Respect them. What does it mean to respect them? Well, I'd say treat them like you do your kids -- love them, protect them, look out for them. I could give you a list of companies of people that I know in our church and other churches I've pastored have worked for. And -- what I noticed was this. When a company took care of a person, their loyalty went through the roof. When a manager looked out for one of the guys that works for him -- what does it mean to look out? Well, one manager I know -- he had a guy that worked for him, and he needed to go before a judge. He had some fines and some problems. And the boss took the afternoon off, and he went and spoke to the judge. Said, "Before you make a decision on this young man, I want you to know the kind of person he's become. He works for me." Took the afternoon, swung for that guy, and defended him and spoke well of him and right of him. I was interested to know how it went that day, so I called him. And I said, "Having watched your boss defend you, do you think you're gonna work hard for him tomorrow?" And he goes, "I'll give that guy my life. He kept me out of jail. He argued my sentence down and he helped pay for it." He said, "Mark, I'll work my tail off for that guy." Why? What you do comes back to you. Not just in the world to come, Heaven. This world. You set yourself up to be the kind of marriage that God designs and the kind of marriage where the husband lays his life down for his wife and his wife submits to his love and leadership -- it will be phenomenal. You go to work with the kind of attitude that he talks about, and no matter whether you're watching me or not, I'm going to show up on time, I'm going to work, I'm not gonna get interested in the phone, and I'm gonna actually give you eight hours, or nine hours, whatever it is you pay me for. You do that, and what you do will come back to you. It's not karma. It's God word.

Who makes the promise? Well, verse 25 tells you. "Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong. There's no favoritism." Who makes sure about that? It's the master in Heaven. It's not a threat -- it's a promise. For those of you who push the edges, it's a threat. For those of you who try and get away with stuff at work, it's a threat. For those of you who have wisdom, it's a promise. God'll make good on it. Do it.

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