

Col 3:18,19 Instructions to husbands and wives Part 1

Paul has been giving instruction on the necessity and process of our becoming like Christ. He speaks of what we should put off... things associated with our old sinful life... and things we should put on... things associated with our new nature in Christ. He then lays out those things that will help us continue on in our sanctification... A thankful heart, resting on the peace found in knowing and trusting God, cleaving and yielding to God's word, being involved in mutual edification, and keeping God's Person and purpose before us.

Then, last week we took an initial look at how all these things are to be lived out and asked the question, "Why does God, through Paul, focus on these particular relationships; husband and wife, parent and child, and master and slave.

- They are intimate relationships
- They are impactful relationships
- They are hierarchical relationships
 - This is where we spent most of our time last week
 - **Hierarchy is divinely ordained as a blessing to all parties and provides opportunity to display the mind and practice of Christ.**

1. This week we will be looking more closely at relationship that has been under attack since its inception... that of husband and wife; of marriage.
 - a. Before we go to our text this morning, let's look at some current disturbing realities...
 - i. Almost 50 percent of all marriages in the United States will end in divorce or separation. (These statistics are not significantly different for people professing to be Christian.)
 1. 40% of first marriages are estimated to end in divorce
 2. 60% of second marriages end in divorce.
 3. 73% of all third marriages end in divorce.
 - ii. Over 90% of Americans consider infidelity as immoral and over 97% of American adults believe it is wrong to engage in extramarital sex.
 1. Yet, around 30% to 40% of Americans cheat on their partners.
 - iii. 65% of adults in the United States identified themselves as Christians
 1. Yet, most Americans (69%) say cohabitation is acceptable even if a couple doesn't plan to get married. Another 16% say it's acceptable, but only if the couple plans to marry, and only 14% say it's never acceptable for an unmarried couple to live together.
 - iv. The effect of marriage length on marital satisfaction is negative (it decreases with a relationship length)

1. So, statistically, the longer you are married, the less satisfaction you find in that marriage.

v. These statistics show a fundamental failure of understanding and practice in marriage. And it points out that what God has to say about the design for marriage might just be important.

2. Col 3:18ff *“Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.*

3. Eph 5:22ff. *“Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies.”*

a. Instruction to wives

i. “be subject” “be under authority... to arrange under

1. “as is fitting in the Lord”

a. Because it is fitting... it is right.

b. It pleases our Lord and is in keeping with His will

2. “as to the Lord”

a. In the same manner as one would submit to Christ

i. The argument... *For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church*

3. “Head”... speaks to authority; to responsibility; to decision making; to leadership

a. Given as a statement of fact; this IS the case

i. Dictatorial? Unloving? Demanding? Is that what we see in the Godhead?

1. Rom 15:28 *“When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.”*

ii. Is 1:18 *“Come now, and let us reason together, “Says the LORD”*. This is said to a rebellious people in the pronouncement of judgment.

1. Is 1:19ff *“Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. 19 “If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land; 20 “But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword.”*
2. It is an invitation to come together in agreement with what is good and right; “with consent of the governed” if you will.
 - a. Not required but desired
- b. Therefore...” *as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything”*
 - i. “In everything”; not in accordance with talent or ability, not in accordance with agreement or desire.
 1. Again, this has as much or more to do with oversight and responsibility than exercise of authority
 - a. It provides safety and care and nurture and order
 - ii. But you might say, “But what if there is a failure of care?... of nurture? Of “godliness”? Does that change the wife’s responsibility to submit “as to the Lord”? Perhaps it becomes even more important...
 1. 1 Pet 3:1ff. *“In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 3 Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; 6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.”*
 - a. Submission is “equated” with chaste and respectful behavior
 - i. “Chaste” from “hagios”; holy. Reverent; holding in high esteem. Respectful in attitude and behavior
 1. Doesn’t compare with “better” husbands

2. Doesn't belittle or demean for their "lack" of faith
- ii. There is an acknowledgement that this can be a fearful path
 1. To submit to one who is not "worthy" of submission
 2. Demands a trust in God's provision and love
- b. Submission is a means of bringing the unsaved or wayward husband to reconciliation with God
- iii. The contentment and joy of submission has been affected by the curse
 1. Gen 3:16 *"To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply*
 2. *Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, But he will rule over you."*
 - a. "desire"; used in Song of Solomon as "sexual desire" and in Gen 4 as a desire to usurp, to overcome
- b. Instructions to husbands
 - i. Col 3:19 *"Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them."*
 - ii. Eph 5:25ff. *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,"*
 - iii. 1 Pet 3:7 *"You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered."*
 1. Love your wives as Christ loved the church
 - a. A sacrificial love
 - i. Php 2:5 *"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross"*
 - b. A sanctifying love (Friday group story)

- i. Eph 5:27 *“that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”*
 - c. A forgiving love
 - i. Luke 13:34 *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!”*
 - d. A caring and nurturing love
 - i. 1 Peter *“as with someone weaker”*; in need of care
 - ii. Eph 5 *“So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church”*
 - iii. Is not the story of God’s/Christ’s love one of provision? Protection? Guidance? Redemption? Identification?
 - 1. Manna in the wilderness, miracle of fish and loaves
 - 2. Pillar of fire and cloud
 - 3. Parting of the Red Sea...Armies of angels
 - 4. Heb 2:11 *“For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers”*
 - e. An honoring love
 - i. *“show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life”*
 - 1. Recognition of great value and “kinship”
 - f. **These just scratch the surface of the love which is to characterize a husband’s love for his wife**
 - 2. “Do not be embittered against them”; angry, exasperated, indignant, irritated... fundamentally distasteful
 - a. What happens before someone becomes embittered?
 - i. There is a failure in all these aspects of love.
- c. Love and “submission” is to be between **all** believers
 - i. John 13:34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. (agapao)
 - ii. Rom 12:10 “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; (philadelphia) give preference to one another in honor;

1. The “submission” here is one of humility and honor... it is giving preference...serving the needs and desires of others over yourself. This does not clash with authority and submission in marriage; it enhances it. It does not operate as an aspect of God’s designed hierarchy, but as an aspect of God’s love and our common faith and kinship

4. Closing thoughts and questions

- a. Does this mean that the husband should be the one handling the finances? Teaching the children? Making all the decisions? The only one in the workplace?
 - i. No; those things can all be done in partnership or delegated to one with greater skill and ability (there may be dangers to consider)
 1. But the husband retains the responsibility... the oversight ... of all these things. **That God designed responsibility cannot be delegated away.**
 - a. Gen 3:6 *“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”*
 - i. Adam’s sin was twofold; the eating of the fruit in disobedience to God’s command and the abandonment of his responsibility to protect and preserve his wife.
- b. How do we deal with perversions of marital hierarchy or counsel a believing wife in a physically abusive or dangerous situation? Does submission demand that the wife stay in the middle of an abusive and toxic situation?
 - i. Some would say “yes” on the basis of 1 Pet 3.
 1. They would appeal to the reality of God’s sovereign protection.
 2. They would look to the straightforwardness of Peter’s admonition
 - ii. Some would say “no” on the basis of an inferred broken covenant and God’s abhorrence of abuse and commitment to justice
 - iii. All would call it a perversion of God’s design for marriage
- c. God does make provision for this very real problem; both in prevention and in correction. But we will have to look at that provision next week.

5. I will close with this reminder of the intimacy and closeness of the relationship between husband and wife as designed by God. Gen 2:18ff *“Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” 19 Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and*

to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. 22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. 23 The man said, “This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.” 24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

6. Let us pray