

Colossians: Jesus Our All In All

Colossians 3:18-25

Colossians 3:18

(KJV) Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

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

Submission. Now there's a word that touches a nerve in each of us! But far from the connotations of control, manipulation, and abuse the context of the word in this verse is *in the Lord*. We would expect that a wife would submit to her husband and his spiritual leadership only if he was *in the Lord*. The lordship of Jesus in a marriage is everything we see in this famous passage:

1Corinthians 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now, we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Agape, or unconditional love is also fitting in the Lord and is the fruit of a connected life to Jesus. The husband can cultivate this love by abiding in Jesus (John 15:4-8) through prayer, study of God's Word, and daily humble obedience to his Saviour. He would do well then to keep watch over his heart:

Proverbs 4:23 *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

Submission through the Holy Spirit is a natural response from the wife in a marriage to the love, respect, and trust she has for her husband. His character and her response work together, and will grow as both husband and wife seek the Lord individually, and together:

Ephesians 5:22-33

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave

himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So, ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

To understand marriage in Paul's time and context, I have included the following blog from Charles Pope, a pastor and Bible teacher from Washington, D.C:

“Among the Jewish people, the father had absolute authority over the household. So absolute were his rights that he could even order members of his family put to death or sell his children into slavery. However, by Jesus' time, selling children into slavery was unheard of and the death penalty was extremely rare—only inflicted with the agreement of other members of the village. Roman government actually forbade Jewish authorities from exacting the death penalty, reserving all such cases to itself.

Along with the many rights enjoyed by men and fathers in Jewish family life, there were also great responsibilities. A man was expected to provide his wife and children with all of their basic needs. Wives often referred to their husbands as lord (Baal) or master (Adon). Wives and mothers had very few legal rights but a lot of practical authority in the home. One recourse she did have was to her father, who might rebuke her husband if he did not properly care for her. However, most men ensured that their wives were provided with the basics of life; in addition, they enjoyed seeing them well-adorned.

Wives did an enormous amount of work and their husbands depended on them. They prepared the meals, fetched the water, baked the bread, squeezed the oil, made the butter, tended the animals, and of course cared for the children. Most men knew that they utterly depended on their wives, and wives knew that they knew this. Wives often generated extra income for the household by sewing and selling surplus oil and other food products. While some marriages were strained, most couples developed a loyalty based on mutual need.”

Colossians 3:19

(KJV) *Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*

(NIV) *Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.*

Like the passage in Ephesians 5, this verse is as clear an instruction as Scripture offers on the responsibility of Christian husbands, irregardless of the wife's behaviour or response. Leaders lead by example, and here Paul is exhorting husbands to lead through Christ's love and godly speech. There is simply no place for sarcasm and cynicism from a husband's tongue. Until the Lord works on softening a man's heart, sometimes he will have to simply discipline himself to be silent:

Psalms 141:3 *Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.*

Proverbs 10:19

In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.

James 1:19-20

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

Colossians 3:20

(KJV) Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

(NIV) Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

Again, it is helpful to observe the role of children in Paul's time, this from Pastor Charles Pope:

"Children – Jewish law and custom commanded from children absolute respect, honor, and reverence for both their father and their mother. They were also expected to care for their parents in their old age.

Children were greatly desired; large families were very common. Barrenness was considered a great curse and many Scriptures speak to the blessing of children. Clearly children were helpful with the household and field tasks, and later on they provided "social security" for their aging parents. Several generations of families usually lived in the same town, providing a good support system. The Jewish family was strong and was admired by the pagans, whose families by this time were in the kind of disarray we see today in the post-Christian West."

So, in Biblical times, to break with established customs and just basic honour and respect of one's parents would be blasphemy worthy of severe discipline or death. That would be the natural outcome of a child with a rebellious heart. For a child behaving in a pleasing manner, as *unto the Lord*, there would be not only love and care, but family unity. So Paul in Colossians 3:20 is addressing children as an integral part of the family unit. Paul's tenderness of tone here recalls John's admonition to his spiritual families in 1 John:

1John 2:12-14

I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

You cannot miss the fatherly spirit in these words, whether from Paul or John. And the context is that of children behaving well and obeying their parents as in relationship with God. This may be the most sincere way a child can bring delight to a parent, and by extension, to the Lord!

Colossians 3:21

(KJV) Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

(NIV) Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

A parent has the responsibility of creating an environment of encouragement for their child, a climate in which words of life are spoken:

Proverbs 18:21

Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Once embittering words are released, it is too late to take them back. While there is grace for a parent who has spoken bitter words to their child in a moment of frustration, a pattern of death-dealing speech causes discouragement and later anger and rebellion in a young person. Paul directs this admonition towards fathers because children look to their fathers as examples and pacesetters in the Christian household.

The parallel to our individual relationship with God as His children can be gleaned from Colossians 3:21 as well. God is the perfect Father, we are the imperfect children needing His discipline in love, so that we can grow into spiritual maturity:

Hebrews 12:5-11

And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Colossians 3:22

(KJV) Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

(NIV) 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.

Paul here exhorts the Colossian Christians to be a witness for the Lord to their masters through their consistent work ethic. What could demonstrate better their reverence for the Lord than working as unto Him? Whether our bosses are staring over our shoulder, or are nowhere to be seen, we have Jesus, our divine Supervisor watching us, delighting in us, helping us in our work through His Word and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Beloved,

let every task, big and small, every moment at work also, be opportunity to worship God, meditate upon His Word, and pray. Hallelujah!

Colossians 3:23

(KJV) And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

(NIV) Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,

In a sentence: *If you include Jesus in the ordinary, He will turn it into the extraordinary!*

Colossians 3:24

(KJV) Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

(NIV) since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Dear Christian, look ahead at the rewards awaiting you in heaven for how you loved, obeyed, and served Jesus in your Christian walk on earth! Jesus looked ahead, past the pain and agony of the cross, to see His eternal glory beside God His Father in heaven:

Hebrews 12:2

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Sin was dealt its fatal blow on the cross. Now, we love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and look also to eternal glory, even as we serve Him out of devoted hearts:

Mark 12:30

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

Luke 6:20-23

And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

And though persecution, trials and tribulations will surely come - rejoice dear one in Christ!

Colossians 3:25

(KJV) But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

(NIV) Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

There is simply no getting around the fact that actions have consequences. Although God is long suffering and merciful, the day is coming when He will call us to account for our presumptuous, deliberate sins:

Hebrews 4:13

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Paul is reminding the Colossian believers not to embrace false grace, or any false doctrine that diminishes the seriousness and inevitable consequences of sin. All of us who are born-again believers are to view sin soberly, as God sees all and knows all, and gave everything in His Son to die for our sins:

Proverbs 15:3 *The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Galatians 6:7-8

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Let me leave you with some encouragement today. Rather than suffer the inevitable painful consequences of your sin, *stay connected to Jesus!* Stay in His Word and obedience to it, stay in unceasing prayer with Him, and watch your heart.

Pray these verses with me today, and be blessed:

Psalms 19:13-14

Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

- Reverend Darren McClelland