

We are continuing in Colossians, but there is a bit of background work that we need to do first. Today, we will be covering one verse, **Colossians 3.18**, which reads:

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Before we really dig in on this, there are three stumbling blocks that I would like to deal with. Before we get into what is being said here, I want to make sure that you don't have the option of leaving here going, yeah but... So the three major things I want to just get out there in the open are the three defenses that are usually put up against this verse:

1. I am a man. This is not a surprise to anyone here, but this may color the way that you hear this sermon. I am a husband, and so you may think that it is in my best interest to preach a sermon on the submission of wives. And this is true. It is in my best interest...but it is because it is a push toward God's created order, not because it gains me something in my marriage alone. When approaching the 18th verse of Colossians 3, we must remember the 17 verses leading up to this, but especially the last 3, which read:

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Please hear this sermon today as me teaching and admonishing through the Word of God, with the desire of the peace of Christ and a unity of the body of Christ, which means ALL THINGS BEING DONE IN THE WAY THAT GOD HAS COMMANDED IT. Including marriage. This is the first sermon of the household code, we will continue on to address husbands, children, parents, bosses, employees and church members. So this is by no means a stand alone idea, it is intrinsically tied into this idea of living the new life.

2. This is a verse directed toward wives. The second major pushback on this verse is not aimed at avoiding the harsh reality of it, but avoiding it because you think it is for someone else. So maybe you are a guy, not soon to be a wife. Or you are single. Or maybe you were married, but aren't anymore and don't plan on it in the future. HOW IN THE WORLD CAN THIS BE IMPORTANT FOR YOU?

Hen we approach God's Word, we must always be cognizant of the fact that God does not give us rules and commands simply to make us do things a certain way, or to test us to see if we can. All of His rules and commands point to His character.

Understanding the household rules help us to understand the relationship of the Trinity, of God the Father to His children, and of Jesus and His church. We will not address this

as a 12 step program to a better marriage and I pray that no matter who you are, that you listen and know God better coming out of this.

3. I thought we overcame this in the 60's. This is probably the biggest barrier that we have to overcome. In the view of society that has been instilled in most of us, the technological, social and ethical spheres of society are all progressing in their progression improving our way of life. The idea is that as we move forward we get better. So the way that things change is directly related to progress, and the things of the past are looked down upon as unenlightened and foolish. Now, I am not here to say that everything from the past was good and now everything is bad, that would be ignorant, and just as foolish as accepting everything new as an improvement. THERE IS SIN IN THE PAST AND THERE IS SIN IN THE PRESENT. How do we decide if it is some past cultural ideal or our current cultural ideal that is the actual ideal? How can we wade through the major influences of cultural influence and era to find the truth?

When we are looking for the reality of who we are, the best place to go is to our Bible. If we are trying to bypass cultural influence and sinful pollution of the ideal, the best place to go is back to the beginning. By returning to Genesis, we get to see creation in its most glorified state, free from sin, unaffected by culture, fully in relationship with God.

Because the verse we are dealing with today has two parts:

1. *Wives, submit to your husbands.*
2. *As is fitting in the Lord.*

In order to know what submission means, we have to understand God, so that we may live a life that is fitting in Him. In Genesis 2, beginning in verse 18, we have the description of the creation of woman. It says:

In the Beginning

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

*“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,*

because she was taken out of Man.”

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2.18-25

God looks down on His creation and declares that everything is good but one thing: *It is not good that the man should be alone.* But God isn't just a critic, pointing out the problems; He is proactive with the solution. It is important to note that this flaw in creation was not a surprise to God, this was all part of the plan, and He had before He started any of it the plan to bring about woman to be the perfect compliment to man. God creates Eve from the rib of Adam, showing their 'one flesh' nature even in creation. He then presents Eve to Adam. Having stared at nothing but animals up to this point, Adam is quite overtaken by this new creation, so he writes her a poem. And unlike some of the pathetic drivel that we come up with to try to impress our ladies, Adam's poem is beautiful.

You can hear in his tone: AT LAST, that he has been longing for such a companion. He has desired her even before he knew her. Woman is created as the ultimate compliment to man. She is made for him. **Which leads to the therefore.** This creation is so wonderful and completing that it will cause a man to leave father and mother and cleave to his wife. The bond that a man has with his parents will be replaced by a deeper more full relationship. Parents, as we will address in a few weeks, have a huge affect on their children beyond just how they parent, but down to who they are. In this new relationship of man and wife, they are no longer just affected by the character of the other person, that character is now who they are. They are effectively one person. They no longer are two individuals, they are two parts on a single entity, a marriage.

Which leads us to the greatest verse in the entire Bible:

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

This one flesh relationship is not just about sex, though we have nudity here, and its not just about becoming so similar that you start to dress the same and get a dog that looks like the two of you. That's creepy. Instead, it is about TOTAL TRUST AND VULNERABILITY. Marriage is about knowing and being known. Allowing all of you stuff to be out there in the open without shame. Flaws are visible. Quirky weird things about the other person are no longer hidden. ALL can be seen, and all is seen as part of the unity.

The curse

But this beautiful relationship does not last long. This ideal of two people coexisting in absolute trust and love is broken by sin. In Genesis 3 we see the beginnings of broken relationship. If you don't know the story, it goes like this:

1. God tells Adam and Eve that they can enjoy all of His wonderful creation save one tree.
2. Satan comes to Eve and convinces her that the only reason that God has said this is that He is holding out on them and that they would be happier and more fulfilled if they just acted as their own gods, which was possible by eating the fruit and having their eyes opened to good and evil.
3. Eve eats the fruit, gives some to Adam, so that they both trample on God's ONE COMMAND

Then in **Genesis 3.7**, we have the antithesis of the naked verse:

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

Innocence was now gone. This absolute trust and vulnerability were gone and in place of them was shame and individuality. All of a sudden, man did not want to be fully seen by woman, and the woman was ashamed to be vulnerable to man. The one flesh was suddenly not as easy and natural as it had once been. We see this come to fruition in the curse for sin that God calls down on woman in **v.16**:

*To the woman he said,
“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you.”*

What we see here is that the mission that God gave to the man and woman in **Genesis 1.28**, was now going to be much harder. This CULTURAL MANDATE, to be fruitful and multiply, subdue the earth and rule over it, was now going to be much more of a fight. In the curse we see how sin directly affects the role of man and woman in completing the tasks that God gave them to FULFILL TOGETHER. For woman, this means that she will no longer laugh children out, and her role as helpmate to the man has been poisoned.

The first part of this is definitely true. I have four kids and I have been in the room from start to finish on all of them, and though there is no firsthand knowledge of the pain, if it is equal to or greater than the inflicted on my hand as I hold on to hers, I can imagine it isn't pleasant.

The second half of this curse is evident in all of our lives as well. It says that the woman will have desire for her husband, but he will rule over her. This idea of desire has two

possible meanings (two ways that it can be read), and I think we can find the best reading in a combination of the two:

1. That she will desire his position of headship and angle for power.
2. That she will have an unhealthy craving for man and seek in him what only God can provide.

Where the woman had been given to Adam to help him keep God's order, there is now a power struggle and where man fails to be the savior that she desires, she will become angry, hostile, and try to fix what he keeps messing up. I am sure none of the marriages in this room have any ounce of this... and the dagger comes in the last line BUT HE WILL RULE OVER HER. This is not an indication that headship, or husband rule is a result of sin (as we can see it existed before the fall), but that chauvinism, misogyny, and domestic violence are a direct result of sin. What it shows us is that while man's failure to lead properly is a result of the fall, the pattern of male headship and female submission is not something that simply pops up with Paul in the NT, it is woven into the fabric of creation, broken by the Fall, and to be the character of those who have received the New Life.

To submit

The life of Jesus defines for us what submission is. He has everything, and yet he sets it aside, emptying Himself of what is rightly His to come to earth for our sake (**Philippians 2.7**). He submits Himself to the rule of earthly, sinful, parents (**Luke 2.51**). He submits Himself to temptation by Satan and to the sufferings of this world (**Hebrews 2.18**).

Ultimately, He submitted Himself to death on the cross for our salvation (**Philippians 2.8**). All of this submission flowed from His relationship with God the Father. All of these acts of submission came back to His submission to the Father in the great covenant of grace that they had made before the world existed. THE GOSPEL EXISTS BECAUSE OF SUBMISSION! Let's not view submission as the powerless act of a weak person, because our salvation is entirely dependant on the submission of Jesus, WHO HAD MORE TO GIVE UP THAN ANY OF US. We see this act of submission within the Trinity in the High Priestly prayer (a conversation between Jesus and His Father) in **John 17.4-5**:

I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Submission in marriage is meant to model and inform our understanding of the Trinity (and vice versa). In a God who is three persons in one perfectly unified God, we see perfect love, headship, and submission.

The definition of biblical submission given to us through Jesus is:

A powerful act of obedience to God, in which you give up your earthly rights, in order to fulfill the divine order, with an understanding that your life and reward are hidden in heaven with Christ.

Submission is a pursuit, NOT a fence to keep you honed in. I think this changes our view of it greatly. It is not God desiring to keep us from something, but giving us the power to act within His created order. It is God promising that you will be more fulfilled and complete and connected with Him, then you will ever be another way.

So as we jump back to Paul's household rules, we see that what he is intending to do here is show them how they can receive the blessing of the one flesh relationship that God created. He is offering submission as A WAY TO WORSHIP GOD AND LIVE IN HARMONY.

So how does this work out practically? Flip over to **Ephesians 5.22-24**.

To submit

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

This is the most complete treatment on the idea of marital submission, and it has two major ideas:

1. Submit to your husbands AS to the Lord.
2. AS the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in EVERYTHING to their husbands.

There is very little wiggle room here. Paul is telling us that just as we are to do EVERYTHING in the name of God, wives are to submit EVERYTHING to their husbands. As we saw in Genesis, you basically give up everything when you get married; give up what you were before to become this new unified person (similar to what happens when we become a Christian). It's not giving up to get nothing in return. It is putting the old way of life away to become something else. We see that within this unified person, it is the husband who carries the burden of leading, and the wives who fight the battle of submission. The job of both highlights and supports the other. When men lead their wives in love, it makes it easier for their wives to submit. When women respect their husband, it makes it easy for their husbands to lovingly lead their wives.

Additionally, what we see here is that for wives, submission has very little to do with your husband. Submission is much more about submitting to God than it is about obeying that flawed guy that you married. That guy who can't make a decision on what burger to get at Red Robin, let alone make a decision for your family that you are willing to follow. I know, you're smarter than him. God chose what was weak in the world to

shame the wise...But we can't let our understanding of the situation cloud God's wisdom. He designed it, and now as He changes our hearts and minds so that we can know how His plan for our lives. We just have to believe it and live it!

I will close by giving you three results of submitting to your husband, even when he isn't worth submitting to.

1. It set the temperature of your home

Paul lays out these household rules in a few different places in scripture. Every time he does, it begins with the submission of the wife. This may seem odd if you understand how Paul usually organizes things (addressing men first as the head), but I believe that it is laid out this way, because NO MAN (Winston Churchill) could lead a woman who wishes not to be led. In the same way that it takes a broken and contrite heart to submit to God, it takes a God-fearing submissive woman to be led by a Godly man.

A woman who does allow herself to be led does not then cease to have an effect. Proverbs 31 paints for us the picture of A WOMAN OF NOBLE CHARACTER. It is not about what this woman does, it is about who she is. V.10-12 tells us:

*An excellent wife who can find?
She is far more precious than jewels.
The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.
She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.*

In other words, women, you have been created to be a rare jewel, but in order to fulfill this you have to act as the treasure. You are lovely, but the true mark in your loveliness is in how you respond to God, and to the husband that he has given to you.

2. It has the power to change your husband

Submission contains within it more power than any other trait. The power struggle that so often exists in marriage is a battle for position, not a battle for growth. And so, men and women do things in order to subject the other to themselves. As a result of the curse, men and women beat one another down until very little is left of either of them. As one flesh that is dedicated to growth and submission to God's design will see that rather than reducing each other, both grow together. In **1 Peter 3.1-2**, the apostle tells us of the power of submission to change a husband:

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

The real power is in following the plan of God. Any other form of power as we see it, makes itself by taking it from others. The power of loving submission is that you give up power joyfully, and in return receive love and growth. Submission is trusting God's power in your relationship rather than your own.

3. It will help others to understand your God.

The greatest role that we have on this earth is as ambassadors for Christ. In the verse right before this one we are reminded that as we have become His, as we have taken on the new life, we are to now live new lives, in WORD AND DEED. The deeds that Paul then lays out for us are familial relationship. In other words, THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY SHOULD LOOK DIFFERENT THAN THOSE AROUND US. We are so afraid to be seen as wacky, different, extreme, that we sometimes try to take the hard teachings of the Bible and make them say something that they do not. But they say what they say, so that people will see our character and glorify our God in heaven. WE HAVE BEEN MADE NEW. Part of that new life is a return to the glory of one flesh as God designed it.

Wives.

1. You were created to be a helper to your husband as a reflection of God.
2. You were created to be united in one flesh as a reflection of God.
3. You were created in the image of God to exemplify His feminine characteristics.
4. You were created in love by a loving God.
5. You were created to worship Him by following His commands, including those to submit.

The most amazing witness to the work of Jesus Christ is a person who lives like Him, for Him, because of what He has done. **Proverbs 31** ends:

*Her children rise up and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:
"Many women have done excellently,
but you surpass them all."
Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.
Give her of the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the gates.*

A woman who fears the Lord: She is beautiful. She is worthy of Praise. She is a blessing to those around her. She is a witness of her husband and of her God. Fear the Lord. Submit to your husband.