

Col 3:18-19

"Since you have been raised with Christ, Love your wife"

What does a godly home look like?

I have some very dear friends in Philadelphia who have a godly home.
Their children are now grown up,
but even in their teen years, they loved to spend time with their parents.
The children even went to boarding school
during part of their high school years.
Then they went off to college in California and Illinois.
One married a fellow from South Carolina.
You would think that they would be scattered all over the country.
But now they all want to move back to the same little hick town
that they grew up in.
The kids think of their parents as their best friends,
and their parents think of their kids as their best friends.
How did they do that?

I would suggest that Colossians 3 tells us how.

Since you've been raised with Christ,
and are a new man in him,
this should affect everything you do.

I once received a telephone call from a friend of mine who was about to get married.
He told me that his fiancée had just called the wedding off.
After he told me what they had been arguing about, he asked,
"If she is supposed to submit to me,
how come she wants me to give in so much,
and refuses to accept my decisions?"

When my friend called me, he was confused and uncertain.
"Doesn't the Bible say she's supposed to submit to me?"

The easy answer is yes
--but the more difficult question is how should he think about her submission?
The solution to his dilemma rests in everything that Paul has been saying:
Since you have died and been raised with Christ, love your wife.
Verses 18 and 19 are simply one extension,
one application of the rest of the chapter.

So let us look at what Paul has said in the context of Colossians three.

1) you are not to demand submission from your wife;
and 2) you are to love her,
because you are a new man in Christ.

1) you are not to demand submission from your wife.

The word *upotassesthe* can either be translated, "submit yourself"
or, "be submissive".

In other words, Paul is saying, "wives, submit to your husbands..."

NOT, "husbands, make your wives submit."

Wives, you are to submit to your husband,
as is fitting in the Lord,

but remember that last phrase,
as is fitting in the Lord!

The reason why you are to submit to him is not because he is such a wonderful guy
--it is not because he deserves it.

You know very well,
that sometimes your husband does not deserve anything from you!

The reason why you are to submit, is not because HE deserves it,
but because our Lord Jesus Christ deserves it.

It is because you have died,
and been raised with Christ,

that you are to set your heart and mind on things above,
and will put to death the things that belong to your earthly, sinful, nature
--and out of your gratitude toward God,

you can submit to him, in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him.

You see, fellows, in yourself, you don't deserve her submission,
and so you have no right to demand it from her.

Paul could have discussed marriage as a creation ordinance.

He could have said,

"God has so ordered things that you wives must submit to your husbands,
because God has placed them over you."

But he didn't.

Paul points us to Christ, and how our union with Christ should affect our marriages.

Colossians three is a sermon about how our union with Christ
transforms us in our relationships with others.

The selfish practices which characterized our earthly nature are to be put to death
--not simply because they hurt other people--

but because they are fundamentally inconsistent with who YOU are in Christ.

You cannot demand that she submit to you,

because if you do, you are becoming harsh and bitter toward her,
and that is exactly what Paul forbids in verse 19.

What does it look to be bitter or harsh toward someone?

You probably all know someone who you would consider bitter.

How do they relate to you?

They may criticize you behind your back,
or undermine the project for which you had worked so hard to build consensus.

Perhaps you know someone who is always dissatisfied with you,
or pesters you constantly about some trivial issue.

Or is it someone who is always harping on your weaknesses,
and knows how to get your goat when you're down.

What do all these "bitter" people have in common?

Is it not that they are trying to control people--
to force others to submit to their agenda?

And when they fail, they hold a grudge,
and their hearts become hard and alienated from you or others.

But husbands, don't you find this same attitude creeping into your heart toward your wife?

Don't you find yourself constantly seeking to have your own way?

And isn't it tempting to remind your wife that she's supposed to submit to you?

Hey, you've got an ace up your sleeve

--you can always point her to Colossians 3, or Ephesians 5 . . . !

Paul is saying DON'T DO IT!!!

Since you have been raised with Christ,
love your wife.

Since you have died with Christ, and your life is now hidden with him in God,
you are NOT to become bitter toward her.

Your desire to have your way all the time

is nothing but the very greed,

anger,

and yes, the bitterness,

which Paul commands you to put to death.

I am reminded of a story told by one of my college professors.

Soon after he was married, his wife called him at work

and asked him whether he would like peas or carrots with his dinner.

"Oh I don't care," he said,

"Whatever you want is fine with me."

But she responded that it really didn't matter to her,

but that she wanted him to decide.

Finally, in exasperation, he said to her,

"Honey, in our marriage, you make the little decisions
and I make the big decisions.

THIS is a little decision!!"

The professor then paused and said,

"Hmm. It seems rather strange, but to this day

my wife insists that all the decisions we've faced have been little ones!"

He then went on to make a good point:

Headship and submission is not particularly about decision making,
but about spiritual leadership and reflecting Christ's love for his church.

This shouldn't surprise us

--that's exactly what Paul is saying here.

So while you are not to make your wife submit to you,

you are commanded to make it easy for her to submit to you.

How?

By loving her.

Now, this is one of the most difficult commands in Scripture.

In Matthew 19, when Jesus' disciples heard his teaching on the permanence of marriage,
and the sinfulness of divorce,

they exclaimed:

"If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry!"

But here, Paul is upping the ante--

not only must a man live with his wife for the rest of his life,
he has to love his wife for the rest of his life!

This is our second point,

2) not merely are we not to be harsh with our wives,
but we are to love them.

Let us look first at why this is the case,

and then we will turn and examine what it means to love her.

a) Why do you love your wife?

And for those of you who are single, why do you *want* to love a wife?

And if there are any of you who are content to remain single all your days,
think about this in terms of your love for Christ's church--

something which the rest of us should consider as well,

because Paul's teaching here applies to all our relationships

--not just marriage.

But why do you love your wife?

Why did you first marry her?

Was it because she was pretty?

Admit it--I'm sure that helped!

But I'm also sure that those of you who have been married for a few years

KNOW that that would never be sufficient.

Is she a good cook?

a wonderful mother for your children?

a pleasant companion?

Those are all very nice.

BUT IS THERE ANYTHING IN YOUR WIFE that could sustain your love for her

in those times when she is being flatly unloveable?
in those times when she is being unreasonable,
selfish,
and insensitive to your needs,
your hopes,
and your desires?

WHAT is going to sustain your love?
It may be romantic and cute to say that she is most wonderful woman in the world,
and that you are going to love her forever
--and you'd better believe it!--
but you know that it's not going to hold you through those times
when she's sick,
pregnant,
and grouchy,
and you've got three whining kids,
two days until that key project is due,
and now you've got to cook dinner because she's not feeling up to it.

Paul is giving you the reason why you are supposed to love your wife in that situation,
ah--but even better,
he's telling you how you're going to pull it off.

The reason why you are going to love your wife,
as he says in verse four,
is because Christ is your life.

The heart of the gospel is that Jesus Christ has died for our sins,
that he has been raised from the dead, so that we might have life;
and has ascended to the Father, so that we might receive the Holy Spirit!

But here, in Colossians, Paul tells you that those who have put their hope and trust in Jesus
have also died,
have also been raised,
and are NOW in Jesus Christ at the right hand of God.

Verses 1-4 say [read]

Your life is now,
even NOW,
hidden with Christ in God.

That is the reality for every believer in Jesus Christ.

You are no longer what you once were.
Paul tells them in verse 7,.....

But that's not you any more!!!

You are NO LONGER the old,
selfish,
arrogant,
lying,
greedy,

angry,
lustful,
inconsiderate,
impatient,
unkind sinner that you used to be.

HE DIED, and your life is now hidden with Christ.

THEREFORE, Paul says in verse 5,
put to death whatever belongs to that old self
and in verse 8

rid yourself of all such things as these!

That's not you any more, so don't live like it is!

Every time you sin
you are denying who you are
Every time you let sin master you,
you are denying the Master who bought you.

If you are in Christ, then you have put on the new self.

If you are united to Christ, and his life has become yours,
then the reason why you love your wife is because of your gratitude to God,
for the great salvation which is yours in Jesus!

You have the guarantee that "When Christ, who is your life, appears,
then you also will appear with him in glory."

THAT is the foundation and the motivation for your love.

This gratitude,
this joy welling up in your heart,
is to overflow into everything you do.

That's what Paul says in verse 17! [read]

And then,

despite the fact that every edition,
translation,
and paraphrase

breaks the paragraph and starts some new section on "Social Duties"

--Paul continues his thought,
and tells you the first thing that you are to do in the name of the Lord Jesus:
wives, submit to your husbands,
and husbands, love your wives.

That's how important marriage is--it's the first thing Paul thought of
when he thought about what it means to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

b) So, now you're all ready to go home and love your wife--
or for you who are single,
go find one so that you can love her--right?

So you bring her flowers,
do the dishes for her,

take her out to dinner next weekend--
then what?
Is that what Paul is talking about?

I learned a lot about marriage from my father,
but he learned it the hard way.
He spent twenty-three years "loving" my mother by simply providing for her.
Not just financially,
he provided a very comfortable environment,
and was a very *nice* man.

And after twenty-three years, she divorced him because she couldn't take it any more.
She wanted something more than a comfortable life.
She was wrong, but so was he.
And through the pain of watching their suffering,
I have begun to learn a little of what it must mean to
[READ v12]

These are not merely passive attributes--
my father has always been a very gentle and patient man,
but also rather passive.
No, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience must be active!
You cannot wait for your wife to tell you what is wrong,
you must find out.
You must take the initiative to learn about the inner workings of her heart,
--you must become a student of your wife--
and when you have hurt her,
you must take the lead, and ask for her forgiveness.
In tears my father has told me how he never knew how to communicate to my mother,
and worse,
he never even realized that he was failing to communicate.
He never noticed that she was wilting before his very eyes.
Your kindness needs to open all those locked doors in her mind,
and gently wipe away all her tears.
Your compassion must reach into your wife's heart,
and heal her loneliness and fear.
Your humility must bow the knee **FIRST**
and seek to honor her and exalt her--
even as Christ has done for us--*his* bride.
You must care for her and give your life to her--
but you cannot stop there--
Rather, following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ,
you must give your life for her;
sacrificing yourself,
your desires,

and your comfortability
for your bride.

Turn over to Philippians 2:6--look at what Paul says about Christ's love for his bride:

In this way you will show forth the love of Christ for his church
in a way that no sermon can equal,
no other picture can compare to.

Your love for her will demonstrate the great and profound mystery
of the union of Christ with his people--
as you tenderly nourish and sustain her,
showering upon her the grace and the love
which God has showered upon you.

And as you give yourself to her,
allowing your hopes,
your desires--
your life--
to merge with hers until they are as truly united as you are with Christ,
then you will find the strength to bear with her,
even when she's being unreasonable,
and the ability to be patient,
even when she's being a grouch.

All this is love.

Paul says in verse 14, [read]

It is this love which God calls you to.

It is this love which you are to bestow upon your wife.

NOT because she deserves it,
but because Christ deserves it.

If you ever get to the point where you give your spouse what he or she deserves,
then you have turned that person into an idol.

You are expecting them to be perfect.

Marriage is not about getting what you deserve--that's LAW.

Marriage is about giving something that is undeserved--

Marriage is about Grace.

It is about portraying the love of God for his people

Don't forget,

the reason why you love your wife,
is NOT because she is such a loveable person.

It is because God has loved you and forgiven you!

He has removed your sin and united you to his Son.

It is he who is at work in you both to will and to do,
as Paul says in Philippians 2:13,
and it is his Spirit who is sustaining you
and sanctifying you daily by the power of Christ's atoning blood shed on the cross.

How do you show love for your wife?

Give yourself to her.

At every moment be kind,

gentle,

patient,

humble,

forgiving--

all these are bound up in perfect unity by love.

Without them there is no love.

You can provide everything in the world for her,

but without these things,

you ARE NOT LOVING HER.

This is your greatest task.

This is your highest calling before God.

If you fail in this,

you will undermine everything else you do,

because THIS is the ultimate test of your union with Christ.

If you are united to Christ,

and he has become your life,

then your love for your wife will demonstrate to the world

that Jesus has united a people to himself.

your gentleness with her will show to this congregation

the tender care with which our Lord sustains us.

and your patience with her will model for your children

God's inimitable forbearance with his people.

God has given you the privilege and the honor of reflecting his rule and stewardship

in your relationship with this woman.

If you take any other example than Christ

you will miserably fail.

If you look to any other for strength and wisdom.

you will become weak and foolish.

But, if you rely upon the one who "gave himself up for his church,

to make her holy,

cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,

to present her to himself as a radiant church,

without stain or wrinkle,"

and if you trust in him,

first for your salvation,

but also for the grace to love your wife in the same way that he loves you,

then when Christ, who is your life, appears,

you also will appear with him in his glory.

-----Conclusion:

If someone asked me, "How much does Christ love the church?"

 Could I point to you?

 Could I say, "look at how he loves his wife"?

But wives, don't start elbowing your husbands yet!

If someone asked me, "How does the church submit to Christ?"

 Could I point to you?

 Could I say, "look at how she submits to her husband"?

As I was preparing this sermon, I stopped and realized that in this light,

 the disciples response to Jesus is pretty understandable!

If this is the situation between a husband and a wife, you've gotta be nuts to get married!

That is where we are once again drawn back to the cross.

YOU HAVE NO HOPE OF EVER LOVING YOUR WIFE

 if you do not fix your heart and mind on the grace of God found in Jesus Christ alone

That is why Jesus is calling you to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow him.

That call led you to Calvary, where you died with Christ.

 But you don't merely follow him to the grave,

 You follow him to the resurrection,

 where you were raised with Christ,

 and your life is now hidden with him

 at the right hand of the Father.

Since then, you have been raised with Christ,

 love your wife,

 and give yourself for her,

 as Christ has given himself for you.