

Colossians 3:17-4:18¹

 **18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.**

1. It is essential to notice that this instruction is given to wives. They are to submit *themselves*. There is NO instruction to husbands to coerce, shame, or force their wives into submission. Submission is always a choice.

2. Ephesians 5:21-24

Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²² *Wives, to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* ²³*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.* ²⁴*Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

- a. Overall, our submission is to each other (Eph. 5:21-24; 1 Cor. 7:4).
- b. In part, this scripture is meant as a protection for women. Wives are to submit to their own husbands, not every man in the church, not even the pastor/elder.
- c. **How do we submit to the Lord?** Willingly out of love. Submission does not bring with it the sense of servitude. It is always a choice born out of love.
- d. **If a woman or man has an oppressive view of his/her relationship with God, they will also have an oppressive view of a wife's submission to her husband.** Both first need to understand their position in Jesus and the freedom that submission to Him brings BEFORE either one of them can reflect the submission of a wife to her husband.
 - i. Unfortunately, the arrogant view that a man is in some way superior to a woman in general within the church gets translated into a perverse perspective of marital submission.
 - ii. It is a sad commentary that many churches today still present the woman as an inferior or merely auxiliary being.
- e. **Submission has to do with rank, not equality.** The fact that wives are told to submit to their own husbands, in no way implies that they are inferior to them.

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

3. Being in submission to one's husband can lead him to Christ.

1 Peter 3:1-6

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, ²when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

- a. **Win your husband, to salvation without words, but by the power of your respectful and pure conduct.**
- b. **This does not mean that a woman is obligated to commit immorality or to go against her own conscience.** A Christian husband should never IMPOSE his will upon His wife, just as Jesus does not impose His will upon us.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, Bible verses are from the NKJV or NASB
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 **19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.**

4. Ephesians 5:25-33

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰because we are members of his body. ³¹"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³²This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

5. 1 Peter 3:7

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

a. Husbands, love, (agape sacrificial love), your wife

"The husbands are exhorted to love their wives. The word here is not *phileō*, a non-ethical fondness or affection. They all did that. That was the type of love which was exercised when they fell in love with them. It is *agapē*, the love that was shown at Calvary, the love produced in the heart of the yielded saint by the Holy Spirit, the love that will cause the husband to sacrifice himself and his own wishes in the interest of the well-being of the wife."-Wuest

b. Build her up with your words (Eph. 5:26).

c. Leave former family ties.

d. Live with your wife with understanding.

e. Don't be bitter against her.

i. "Be bitter" is *pikrainō*, "to embitter, exasperate, irritate." Lightfoot translates, "show no bitterness, behave not harshly."-Wuest

ii. **Bitter** means: sharp, acrid, unpleasant, painful, stinging, harsh, difficult or distasteful, exhibiting strong animosity, grievous, anguish, disappointment, resentful, cynical.


6. Wuest makes the following commentary in reference to 1 Peter 3:7.

While the subject matter in this verse does not align itself with the contents of verses 1-6 we are including its interpretation and translation with our consideration of those verses, rather than make a separate heading for it. The word "likewise" goes back to 2:17 where exhortations are addressed generally to all the saints. In 2:18-25, Christian household slaves are addressed, in 3:1-6, Christian wives, and in 3:7, now, Christian husbands. Exhortations to a Christian manner of life are addressed only to the saints. God has no exhortations to the unsaved except to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "dwell" is the translation of an old verb which referred to domestic association. The word "knowledge" here refers to an intelligent recognition of the marriage relation. The word "honor" is the translation of the same Greek word in 1:19 translated "precious." Christian

husbands are to deem the helpmeets which God has given them precious, and are to treat them with honor. The word "giving" is the rendering of a Greek word which means "to assign to, to portion off."

Husbands should keep a special place of honor in their hearts for their wives. They should treat them with special deference, courtesy, respect, and kindness. The word "vessel" is the translation of a Greek word referring to a vessel used in the services of the temple (Mark 11:16), also to household utensils. The English word comes from a Latin word *vasellum*, the diminutive form of *vas*, a vase, the Latin words referring to a receptacle which covers and contains. Thus, the word comes to refer to an instrument whereby something is accomplished. It is used in the latter sense here. The word is used of Paul who is called "a chosen vessel" (Acts 9:15), a chosen instrument of God. The husband is to dwell with the wife, remembering that she is an instrument of God as well as the husband, a child of God to be used by Him to His glory. The husband must ever keep in mind that she is the weaker instrument of the two, not morally or intellectually, but physically. This attitude toward the wife on the part of the husband therefore includes loving consideration of the wife in view of the fact that she is not physically as strong as he is.


The husband should pay due honor to the wife because she is a joint-heir together with him of the grace of life, eternal life, the gift of God. That is, he is ever to remember that Christ died for her as well as for him. Her soul is just as precious in the sight of God as his is. This admonition was especially needed at the time when this letter was written because of the low place in general which was accorded womanhood. History records the fact of the high place accorded womanhood in Macedonia, showing that the woman was not generally held in high esteem nor given that respect, reverence, and honor that her sex (gender) demands of the man. Christian husbands today will do well to heed this admonition. The husband is to pay her honor so that their prayers be not hindered. The word "hindered" in the Greek text means literally "to cut in, to interrupt." Failure to give due honor to the wife will result in a cutting in on the efficacy of their united prayer times.

 **20 Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.**

7. Ephesians 6:1-3

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

- a. Children obey your parents, knowing it will please the Lord and bless your life.


 **21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.**

8. Ephesians 6:4

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.


- a. Fathers, don't provoke your children, don't exasperate them,
- b. Show them the same discipline that the Lord shows you.
- c. "Provoke" is *erethizō*, "provoke, irritate."-Wuest

- d. "Discouraged" is *athumeō*, "to be disheartened, dispirited, broken in spirit, lose heart."-Wuest's

 **22** *Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.*


9. In Paul's day, servitude was quite common and legal. However, in our society, we do not have slaves. It is not exactly equal to compare the slave-master relationship with employee-employer. Employees in our society have certain legal rights and are not owned by the employer.

- a. That being said, it makes perfect sense to say that employees should do their work as unto the Lord in sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

 **23** *Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.*


10. While we are free to apply these principles to our lives, Paul is still addressing slaves.

11. What a strong encouragement this must have been to the slaves. Although their position in life was not the best, Paul encourages them that they are in reality serving Jesus and that they will receive the reward of the inheritance. Again, we are reminded that there are no classes in the body of Christ.

 **25** *For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.*


12. We automatically conclude that the consequences of the wrong refers to punishment from God. However, "God" is not mentioned in this verse. Furthermore, the word "for" in the NASB (and "but" in the KJV) which might connect verse 25 to verse 24, are not there in the Greek. There is NO reference to God in this verse. It simply says, "He who does wrong..." Paul is still addressing believers who are slaves. We believe he is telling them that if they do wrong, they will receive *from their masters* the consequences of the wrong which they do, and without partiality.

Chapter Four


 **1** *Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.*

13. Now Paul focuses his attention on masters. He encourages them to be just and fair as masters considering that they also have a Master.

- a. Again, in our society, we do not have masters, so this cannot directly apply to employers; however, in principle it is fair to say that employers should treat their employees justly.


 *2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;*

14. We are not sure what was in the mind of the NASB translators about verse 2. First of all, “**Devote** yourselves to prayer” is not an accurate translation. The best translation is, “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving (ESV).”²
- a. The “it” in this sentence refers to the prayer.
 - b. Vine’s Expository Dictionary defines the word as “to endure in, or persevere in, to be continually steadfast with a person or thing,” is used of “continuing” in prayer with others.
 - c. Note that “devote” implies an attitude which cannot be manufactured, whereas, “continue” is an action that one can accomplish.
15. Secondly, “an attitude of” is NOT IN THE TEXT. It should read, “keeping a watch in it with thanksgiving”.
- a. It is difficult to control one’s attitude, but one can control one’s actions. Again, we question the motives for inserting “attitude of”. It seems to lay a heavy burden on the reader which is not present.
 - b. It is more likely that Paul is saying, “Keep on praying and watch over your prayers with thanksgiving.” We pray, then we watch over our prayers by giving thanks.
 - i. For example, you might pray, “Lord, please give us wisdom in this situation.” After that, it would make more sense to pray, “Thank-you for giving us wisdom.” In this way, I am watching over my prayers while giving thanks.

 *3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; ⁴ that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.*

16. With this verse connected to the one we just discussed, we see that Paul is talking about petition prayer. Keep praying and watch over your prayers with thanksgiving, and while you are at it pray for us also the following things.
- a. Paul wanted an opening for the Word, the message which is the power of God, which is Christ in you the hope of Glory.
 - b. Paul wanted to make the Gospel clear to the hearers.
Matthews 13:18
"Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.

² Consider also that one of the supposed requirements for Christians is “daily devotions”. Perhaps the translators wanted to reinforce that concept. It is impossible to know. Whenever a scripture does not seem to reflect the New Covenant, it is always a good idea to look a little deeper by checking the literal translations and commentaries.


 **5** *Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.⁶ Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.*

17. It is important how we behave toward and in the presence of unbelievers as it is a reflection of our faith. Behavior that might go unnoticed in the life of an unbeliever will be cause for cries of hypocrisy in the life of a believer.

18. Let our words be words of grace.

1 Peter 3:15

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. ¹⁶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. ¹⁷ For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

 **7** *As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. ⁸ For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts; ⁹ and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here.*


19. Tychicus was an inmate friend of Paul's from Asian province who accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey. He is likely the one who delivered this letter and communicated with them about how Paul was doing.

- a. Beloved brother
- b. Faithful servant
- c. Fellow bond-servant
- d. Able to encourage

20. Onesimus was the runaway slave of Philemon and most likely accompanied this letter and Tychicus along with the letter, Philemon, to his master. Paul was sending him back to be reconciled to Philemon.

- a. Faithful and beloved brother

21. Notice how Paul gives them equal status to Tychicus and Onesimus in saying, "They will inform you..."

 **10** *Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him);*


22. Aristarchus was a Jew from Thessalonica. He had traveled with Paul since the riot that occurred in Ephesus on his third missionary journey. He likely was with Paul or at least visited Paul in prison at the time of the writing of this letter.

- a. Fellow-prisoner


23. Mark deserted Paul on his first missionary journey, so he refused to take him with him on the second. Barnabas, Mark's cousin, took him under his wing and stopped traveling with Saul

because of this sharp argument as to whether Mark should go *with them*. He wrote the book of Mark. Later, Paul reconciles with John Mark and sees him as someone who is faithful.

24. **Barnabas** was John Mark's cousin who was with Paul on his first missionary journey. He is known as a comforter and encourager.

 **11** and also Jesus who is called *Justus*; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me.

25. We don't know much about Jesus who was called **Justis**, only that he was a Jewish believer whom Paul considered a fellow-worker in the gospel and an encouragement to Paul.

 **12** *Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.* ¹³ For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

26. **Epaphras** was most likely a convert from Paul's ministry and a fellow prisoner. He most likely is the one who started the church in his hometown of Colosse.


- a. Our dear fellow servant
- b. Faithful minister of Christ on behalf of the Colossians
- c. Declared to us your love in the Spirit
- d. "He is one of you" means that he was from Colosse, likely a Gentile.
- e. Bondservant of Christ
- f. Laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God
- g. He has a great zeal for you and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.

27. Here we have what Epaphras prayed for the Colossian believers The purpose of praying for others, is so that they will stand perfect, complete, and fully assured in all the will of God.

 **14** *Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas.*


28. **Luke** accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys. He was therefore an eyewitness to what he wrote about in the book of Acts. He also wrote the Gospel of Luke.

29. **Demas** was with Paul at this time, but would later abandon his ministry with Paul (2 Tim. 4:9).


 **15** *Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house.*

30. **Nympha** was a woman, not a man (some translations read "Nymphas and the church that is in his house"). There might have been a deliberate attempt by translators in the church to change female leaders' names to male. Another example was Junias, who was actually **Junia**, a woman referred to as an apostle (Romans 16:7)! The fact that the church was in Nympha's house is


curious. Obviously she was the owner of the house. It might have also meant that she was an overseer/pastor of those who met there. Or, it is possible that the believers met in her house because it was larger and could accommodate more people.

 **16** *When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.*

31. Paul's letters were passed among the churches.

 **17** *Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."*

32. Archippus was probably the son of Philemon or maybe an elder of the Colossian church. The letter to Philemon was addressed to him along with others in which Paul referred to him as "our fellow soldier".

 **18** *I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.*

33. Paul began the letter with, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father," and he ends it with, "Grace (undeserved favor from God) be with you."