

“A Charge to Wives”
Colossians 3:18
(Preached at Trinity, September 30, 2018)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we've seen, Paul's primary focus in **Chapter 2** was to speak against the false teaching threatening the health of the Colossian church. **Chapter 3** is much more practical. Paul's focus has been to encourage the Colossians to press on in the Christian life. This has been at the heart of this Epistle from the beginning.
Colossians 1:9-11 NAU - "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience"
Colossians 1:28 NAU - "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ."
3. In **Chapter 3** Paul is making certain presumptions:
 - A. He is presuming the fact that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead and sits upon His throne.
 - B. He is presuming the power and authority of Jesus Christ in His exaltation. The idea is that God sits upon the throne and that Jesus Christ is seated at His right hand. The right hand signifies authority and power. Jesus Christ reigns with all power and authority.
 - C. Paul is also making the assumption of the union of Christians with Christ. He is declaring that the resurrection of Christ has a profound effect upon the Christian life today.
4. Our union with Christ changes everything. **See Verses 12-17**
5. Now as we continue with **Verse 18** Paul becomes much more specific. What effect does Christ have upon our relationships with others—More specifically, the home – marriage and family relations.
The family is the training ground for the next generation. It is the future of society. It is the stock from which the future leaders of our church and society will come.
6. It is amazing how brief this passage is. Paul is summing up the responsibilities of the members of the family in just a few words. He wants us to think by way of priority—what is the chief duty of each member of the family: Wives submit, Husbands love, Children obey, Fathers do not be unreasonable

7. This morning we'll limit our focus to **Verse 18**
 "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord."
 This deals with the subject of what is called "complementarianism."
 Complementarianism is the Biblical teaching that men and women have different, but complementary roles. The Bible describes these distinctions most clearly in marriage, in the home, and in the church.
8. This is a very sensitive subject in light of current events and endless scandals that been exposed via the internet and news. Scores of women are coming forth describing abuses they have endured. Matters of sin must always be addressed, especially when it involves the church. The church must always be willing to confront sin and always ready to come to the aid of those threatened or victimized by abuse and hold the abuser accountable.
9. The danger is to see these terrible displays of sin and presume the fault lies with the Biblical teaching regarding distinction in the roles of men and women. The fault is never with the teaching of Biblical truths. The fault lies squarely with the sinfulness in the hearts of men.
10. Albert Mohler has given some clarity on this:
 "Is complementarianism the problem? Is it just camouflage for abusive males and permission for the abuse and mistreatment of women? We can see how that argument would seem plausible to so many looking to conservative evangelicals and wondering if we have gone mad.
 But the same Bible that reveals the complementarian pattern of male leadership in the home and the church also reveals God's steadfast and unyielding concern for the abused, the threatened, the suffering, and the fearful. There is no excuse whatsoever for abuse of any form, verbal, emotional, physical, spiritual or sexual. The Bible warns so clearly of those who would abuse power and weaponize authority. Every Christian church and every pastor and every church member must be ready to protect any of God's children threatened by abuse and must hold every abuser fully accountable. The church and any institution or ministry serving the church must be ready to assure safety and support to any woman or child or vulnerable one threatened by abuse.
 I believe that the pattern of God's pleasure and design in the family and in the church is essential to human flourishing. I believe that the Bible is the inerrant and infallible verbally inspired Word of God. I believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the great news that any sinner who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved. I believe that theology rooted unapologetically in Scripture is the only sure foundation for the home, the church, and the Christian life."¹
11. At Trinity, we will continue to teach the Biblical pattern for men and women. The Bible displays the beauty and excellence of our Creator who has made men and women different, and yet wonderful reflections of His glory. Both men and women have been created to function in distinct roles, both being essential to the wellbeing of the human condition upon the earth. The faithful discharge of our particular calling is of great importance.

¹ Mohler, Albert, [Baptist Press](#), May 24, 2018, "Mohler Confronts SBC's 'horri-fying #MeToo Movement'"

William Gouge wrote in 1622: “Let therefore notice be taken of the particular callings wherin God hath set us, and of the several duties of those callings, and conscience be used in the practice of them. He is no good Christian that is careless herein. A bad husband, wife, parent, child, master, servant magistrate or minister, is no good Christian.”²

12. We are going to spend the next few weeks looking at the family – wives, husbands, children, parents. Paul begins with the institution of marriage. This is the foundation of the family. Without a strong foundation of marriage the family will be weak. If wives are disrespectful to their husbands, the children will learn to disdain authority. If the husband is abusive and disrespectful towards his wife, the children will also disdain her and learn to be rude and disrespectful.

Within the family there is a high priority of marriage. Before there were children there was Adam and Eve, the husband and wife. And after the children have all left the home of their birth, there will still be husband and wife.

13. We begin with Paul’s charge to wives: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.” I’ll also incorporate Paul’s words in his Epistle to the Ephesians.

I. The roles of husbands and wives find their beginning at creation

A. In creation God made man and woman different, distinct, unique

1. Eve was created as Adam’s helper. He was to love his wife by accepting his responsibility for making their partnership a platform for displaying God’s glory. He was to show his love by cherishing her, caring for her as the weaker vessel. He was to show his love by knowing her intimately—by studying her needs. He was to show his love for her by sacrificing himself to meet her needs.
 - a. Man was given the authority of headship.
This means that Adam was given the role of leader, of representative. This is seen in God making His covenant with Adam. Although Eve was the first to sin, Adam held the chief responsibility for the fall into sin.
Genesis 3:9 NAU - "Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"
 - b. Adam was to be the leader of his home. He taught God’s covenant requirements to his wife. Part of Adam’s sin was relinquishing his leadership to Eve.
 - c. As Adam’s helper Eve was to display her love by supporting him in his labor of displaying God’s glory, by submitting to his leadership, by giving herself in domestic dominion to the glory of God.
The chief part of Eve’s sin was usurping the authority of her husband.
2. As we see here in **Colossians 3**, wives are charged to be subject to their husbands. The word is ὑποτάσσω
The KJV, ESV, NIV translate the word – “submit.”
It is in the imperative.

² Gouge, William, *Domestical Duties*, (Puritan Reprints, 2006), Page 10.

3. This word is appalling to the ear of our modern culture. For many the phrase “wives submit” sounds offensive. We naturally want total autonomy and independence. We want absolute freedom. Most believe anything that interferes with our perceived freedom must be abolished.
4. As Christians we know that true freedom can only be found in Christ.
John 8:32 NAU - "and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
5. We have to understand this is God’s design for women. It is a high calling. It is God’s purpose which is perfect in every way. In Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians he describes this duty in the context of the masculine mandate of headship.
Ephesians 5:22-23 NAS - "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"
6. There is a general principle of men in leadership over women. But Paul isn’t speaking of men and women in general in this passage. He is directing attention to husbands and wives.
 - a. Paul says the wife is in submission to “her own” husband. –
τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν in the TR
 - b. The Greek could literally be translated “her own man.”
It is from the Greek word, ἀνὴρ which simply refers to an adult male. While men and women should respect one another in their particular roles, a woman has a particular duty towards her own husband.
 - c. This was demonstrated by my wife at her work. She was under submission to her boss, but this did not take priority over her duty to me as her husband.

- II. The model for Godly wives is their submission to Christ – “as is fitting in the Lord.”
Ephesians 5:22 NAS - "as to the Lord"
- A. Wives are to submit to their husbands because of their submission to Christ; because He commands it.
Ephesians 5:24 NAS - "But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything."
1. The original uses the word ὡς which is a conjunction denoting comparison. As she is submissive to Christ she should also be to her husband.
 2. Wives find obedience to this command difficult because they find obedience to Christ difficult. But husbands have the same problem. It is hard to love their wives sacrificially being willing to set aside themselves.
 3. This is true of all authority. Sin always makes submission difficult. Adam and Eve did not submit to God’s command in the Garden – they ate of the forbidden fruit.
 - a. After the fall God charged Eve regarding her relationship with Adam: **Genesis 3:16 NAU** - "he will rule over you."
 - b. **Genesis 3:16** says more:
Genesis 3:16 NAU - "Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you."

- c. This isn't talking about desire in a positive sense. It is referring to the difficulty Eve would have in submitting to Adam. It means she would lust after Adam's authority. The woman has an unwholesome desire to possess and control her husband.
4. This gives clarity to Paul's meaning in 1 Timothy
1 Timothy 2:12-15 NAS - "But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. ¹³ For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve. ¹⁴ And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. ¹⁵ But *women* shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint."
- a. Paul is saying Eve's sin was connected to her failure to submit to Adam's authority.
- b. In Genesis 3 God told Eve her place of dominion would be in the home while Adam would labor primarily outside the home.
Genesis 3:16-19 NAU - "To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you." ¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. ¹⁸ "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."
- c. Paul is telling the woman she would be saved or preserved through child-bearing. In other words, she would be preserved from committing the same sin by laboring in the home – her God given domain.
- B. But there is another dimension to this obedience that makes it most difficult.
1. With our duty to submit and obey Christ we are charged to serve one who is perfect in every way and who loves us with infinite perfection.
 2. With the charge to submit to your husband you are being charged to submit to a sinner who sometimes leads foolishly and with sinful pride. He fails to love you sacrificially, sometimes selfishly giving more attention to himself and his desires than to you and your needs.
 3. God understands this perfectly and yet commands:
 "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord."
 4. Husbands often behave foolishly and sinfully. They sometimes lose the respect of their wives by failing to live as men. This demands repentance and change on their part.
 In such cases it demands much grace from the wife.
- C. As a Godly woman you should be seeking to mature in this area.
1. Your husband is sinful. You may feel he is unworthy of your respect, but this doesn't change God's charge to you.

2. The exception is if he asks you to do something in opposition to God's commands or something that will put you or your family in danger.
3. Your husband has a high charge upon his life. God has given him great dominion and with it great accountability. But your husband's faithfulness to his commission has no impact upon God's charge to you—
"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord."
4. One of the greatest dangers for the wife is the tongue
 - a. Women are much more expressive than men. They are much more open to share their feelings. It is easy to begin to nag and complain.
Proverbs 19:13 NAS - "the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping."
Proverbs 21:19 NAS - "It is better to live in a desert land, Than with a contentious and vexing woman."
Proverbs 21:19 CSB - "Better to live in a wilderness than with a nagging and hot-tempered wife."
Proverbs 12:4 NAU - "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who shames *him* is like rotteness in his bones."
 - b. You must never speak negatively to others about your husband. If he sins reprove him privately and lovingly. Guard your heart against the wrong use of words.
 - c. Your words must always have an eye towards edifying. In other words, speak words to others that will build up your husband.
Ephesians 4:29 NAU - "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a *word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, that it may give grace to those who hear."
 - d. Men need and appreciate encouragement and affirmation from their wives.

III. There are many times that the wisdom of a wife has an immeasurable effect upon the wellbeing of the home.

A. Submission does not imply inferiority

1. The best example of this is the relationship of the Godhead
1 Corinthians 11:3 NAU - "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ."
 - a. Jesus came in obedience to the Father
John 4:34 NAU - "Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."
Philippians 2:8 KJV - "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."
 - b. This in no way implies any sense of inferiority – the Father and Son are one and equal, yet in the economy of the Godhead Jesus came in submission to the Father
2. Husbands and wives are equal before God, yet wives are to be in submission to their husbands.

- B. God often blesses men with wives of great wisdom and discernment. Her value is immeasurable.
1. A Godly wife often approaches her husband and expresses her wise counsel.
Proverbs 31:26 NAS - "She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue."
 2. Her wisdom can have a wonderful impact upon the home. A wise husband would be foolish not to listen to her.
 3. Many times in marriage the wife is actually much more able than her husband.
 - a. Perhaps she is more intelligent or better educated or perhaps she just simply has more wisdom.
 - b. This changes nothing regarding her responsibility to honor her husband. God has designated the wife to be in submission to her husband.
 - c. Martyn Lloyd-Jones expressed it well – “Are you saying that such a brilliantly gifted woman has to subject herself to her husband, to a man who is altogether her inferior? There is only one answer to that argument; the person who frames it is arguing against God. God knows all about such cases. What God says is that if that gifted, brilliant woman is not subjecting herself to her own husband she is sinning. Whatever her gifts she is to submit to her partner in marriage.”³
 4. The Godly wife recognizes that ultimately, God holds her husband responsible for the well-being of the home. But the wise counsel of a Godly wife has protected many a man from leaping forward with an ill-considered plan.

Conclusion:

1. God gives his model here for marriages and families as He designed them to be. We find men leading their wives in love and sacrifice and wives following the leadership of their husbands with grace and confidence.
2. Sin always makes this difficult. The solution is repentance for our failures and submission to the leadership of the Holy Spirit as the beauty of Christ draws us above this world.
3. May God bless us in our weakness with His grace and pity and may He help us glorify Christ with our lives.

³ Lloyd-Jones, D.M., *Life in the Spirit, An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18 to 6:9*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), Page 110.