

# New Attitudes for Old Relationships

## A Husband's Love Part 2

Colossians 3:18-4:1

Christians proclaim the preeminence of Christ to the world by how we follow and lead.

LTS: Phil 3:7-14

As we continue this morning looking at the biblical role of a Christian husband, we need to remind ourselves that the whole thrust of Paul's teaching here is that the Christian marriage ought to be different than the non-Christian marriage. A Christian marriage ought to be marked by an apparent and obvious joy. The satisfaction and sense of oneness that Adam and Eve lost when they were thrust out of paradise, should be reclaimed by everyone who has been reconciled to God by the work of the second Adam - Jesus Christ.

What disrupts and fractures the unity of a man and wife but sin? And what can reunite a man and wife but forgiving grace? You see, embracing the gospel of Christ is not the same as affirming that you believe in a set of religious propositions. To embrace the gospel is to agree to a new paradigm for living. True Christians don't live like they did before coming to Christ.

- Having received grace, we minister grace.
- Having received forgiveness, we offer and request forgiveness.
- Having received mercy, we grant mercy.
- Having been saved by sacrificial love, we serve in sacrificial love.

These are some of the gospel-wrought characteristics that ought to be apparent and obvious in our lives. And they ought to be especially evident in our marriages. Can you imagine what it would be like if all professing Christians lived by what we profess? If we lived in a manner consistent with the gospel? There would be NO statistic for Christian divorce! It would simply read, "Non-Christian divorce rate: 50%. Christian divorce rate: 0%." It would literally be that dramatic a difference! And it wouldn't just be that marriages would stay together by the white-knuckled force of agonized determination. They would stay together because they delight to do so!

If you want to reclaim the joy of marriage and turn Paradise Lost into Paradise Regained, you have to return to God's original design. Because God has designed that His glory be magnified in the joy of Christ-saturated marital love.

This is precisely what Paul is speaking of in Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5. He doesn't spill a lot of ink explaining the wife's role in this regard, but he has a lot to say about a husband's responsibility to his wife. So, what should a Christian husband know. If in a joyful Christian marriage, a wife is to willingly "rank herself under" her husband in honor, how is a Christian husband to love his wife?

Last week we learned that a husband is to "serve" his wife by loving her like Christ loves the church. That means he loves her with a Sacrificial love, a Purifying love, an Attentive love, and a Relentless love.

You will remember how Paul calls us to...

## I. A sacrificial love (Eph.5: 25)

1. Together we learned that a sacrificial love is a love that is modeled after the love the Lord Jesus for His bride, the church. It is a love that dies to self and lives for the needs of the other. It is the same kind of love by which Christ gave himself over to death on her behalf.

2. A quick reminder of an important term is always in order here. Paul writes, "Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. In verse 2 of that same chapter, Paul writes,

Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children; <sup>2</sup> and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

A. The word for "gave himself" means to deliver over, to betray

B. Mat. 27:26 we read that Pontius Pilate... handed Jesus over to be crucified.

C. Mark 3:19 points to Judas Iscariot as the one "who betrayed Him." (same word)

D. Rom 1. Paul talks about God's judgment of abandonment where God "gave them over to their sexual desires, their homosexual desires, and their depraved minds. To these impulses, God gave them over.

E. Rom. 8:32 refers to God as the One who "did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all..."

3. The point is that the love Jesus lavished upon people was a love that expected to suffer. He didn't commit to loving as long as it didn't cost too much or hurt too badly. His was a love that anticipated, even expected to suffer.

4. So men, the real test of your love is how you respond when the relationship gets painful;

- When things don't go your way;
- When your expectations are not fully met.

- Will you murmur, or complain, or lash out with words you will later regret? Or will you bear up under the pain and choose to respond in love just the same.

5. Men, we are called to love our wives like Christ loved the church and “gave himself up for her.” Do we love our wives like that?

6. Second, this text teaches that a Christian husband determined to reclaim and maintain the joy of marriage will approach his wife with...

## II. A Purifying Love (26-27)

Read. V. 25-27

1. Want to know a secret? The path to happiness and the path of holiness are the same path. Do you want your marriage to be the experience of Paradise Regained? Then pursue holiness with her and for her. Be holy and pursue holiness.

2. You see, the only way Jesus could know the joy of being eternally joined together with HIS bride was by making her holy even as He is holy. His ultimate act of personal sacrifice was expressly for the purpose of cleansing us and making us holy. So, when He comes for His bride on the great wedding day of the Lamb, she will be brought forth “in all her glory, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” She will radiate perfection, completely free from the power and presence of sin, having no moral or spiritual stain. She will be intrinsically beautiful!

3. And how will she (the church) be brought to this state of radiant holiness? He will have brought her to it. He will have made propitiation by His own sacrifice and applied it through the mediating, priestly ministry of justifying, sanctifying grace.

4. Even so, a husband is to serve with a purifying love that bears the fruit of her holiness. He is to be the foremost instrument in her sanctification. If she grows to be a woman of great spiritual beauty, it should be because her husband has been a humble partner in developing that beauty. And it will be because he “let the word of Christ dwell richly in” himself (Col. 3:16).

5. That’s what Paul means by the “washing of water with the word” (v. 27). Men, the word of God is the agent of cleansing and beautifying for Christ’s bride and your bride.

6. Now if you have been around here very long you have heard me use expressions like, “for God’s glory and your own joy.” Well, here is an excellent text to support that kind of thinking. Notice why (v. 27) Christ washes and purifies His bride with the word. It is so “that He might present her to Himself... in all her glory.” You see, He does it Not just for the glory of the Father and the good of His church, but for His own joy! He does it for Himself!”

7. We’re going to see this again in verse 28, but it’s important to emphasize, men, that the ministry of “loving your wife” (and family, for that matter) by serving them the cleansing and beautifying word of God is not just your duty, it is to be your delight! It is not just for her! It is

for you as well! Paul even says (1 Cor. 11:7) that your wife is your glory! So don't think of yourself as much of a man unless her godliness is due in part to your ministry to her.

8. Men, is your wife more like Christ because she is married to you? Or is she more like Christ in spite of her marriage to you. Does the word of God hold a central place in your marriage and home? Do you talk about it? Do you memorize it? Do you read it? Do you model obedience to it? To you address sin graciously and gently? That's the high calling of a Christian husband.

9. Men, if your goal is to see "Paradise Lost" become "Paradise regained" Love your wife with A Purifying Love.

10. The third kind of love that God calls us to, men, is...

### III. An Attentive Love (28-30)

Read 28-30

1. When Paul's readers in Ephesus and the surrounding Roman provinces read these words, they would have been shocked. This was revolutionary. After all, a Roman husband was the "god" of his household. The family existed to serve him. And no one was expected to be more attentive to him than his wife. What's more, if she didn't perform to his liking, he could just do away with her and get himself a new wife who would worship him.

2. Not so in a Christian marriage! The calling of a Christian husband is to die to self and live for the one he loves. He is not to be the "god" of his home. He is to be the chief servant, even as he leads.

3. Perhaps you have been told that to be a husband and father is to hold the highest rank, authority, and privilege in the home. But now that you have come to Christ, the whole model is turned upside-down. You are not to treat others as if you are the highest in rank and they are the lowest. Rather, you are humble yourself and take up the basin and towel as did Jesus.

4. In other words, rather than viewing your wife as the means of having your own needs met, now you view yourself as the one responsible for meeting her needs.

5. How concerned should a man be about caring for his wife? Well, how concerned are you about caring for your own body? Isn't that what Paul is saying here? Let me illustrate with a few questions:

- Who dressed you this morning? You did!
- Who brushed your teeth? You did!

- Who fed you breakfast? You Did!
- Who bathed you and combed your hair? You did!

6. And why did you do those things? It's because you care about how you look, and how your breath smells and how your hair appears and how hungry you feel. You go to great lengths to make sure everything that needs to be done for you gets done. You make significant sacrifices in time and money to attend to what you need. In other words, You LOVE Yourself! Remember the definition of love: To love is to give what I have that you need because God wants me to, no matter how I feel. And that's the kind of love you lavished upon yourself before you came to church today.

That's exactly what God is calling you to do for your wife.

7. Why? Because your marriage is supposed to be a living picture of the joyful union of Christ and His church. We are to serve our wives according to how Christ serves the church.

8. How does Christ serve the church?

- When she needs strength, he gives her strength.
- When she needs encouragement, he give her that.
- And so with everything else she needs.

Just as God supplies "all our needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19), the Christian husband seeks to supply all the needs of his wife." Even to his own hurt.<sup>1</sup>

9. Men, something is terribly wrong if we look at our wives merely as cook, house-keeper, educator of our children and occasional companion. She is a God-given treasure to be loved, cared for, nourished and cherished.

10. The word nourish (29) means to provide for her physical needs. It means giving her all that she needs to fulfill the role that God has called her to.

11. The word cherish means to show tender love and physical affection to let her know beyond all doubt that she is your treasure; that you are committed to her encouragement, comfort, protection and security; that you love and adore her above every other woman on earth.

12. That's the way Christ loves His church. The Lord has bound Himself inextricably to His bride. A lack of care for her would be a lack of care for Himself. Verse 30 says that's "because we are members of His body."

13. You see, the Lord makes no distinction in this regard between Himself and us. He considers us one with Him so that if we suffer, he suffers. If we rejoice, He rejoices. If we are in need, He

---

<sup>1</sup> MacArthur *Ephesians*, p. 301

feels that need and meets it. Likewise, as He seeks glory for Himself, He seeks the glory of the church. As He seeks His own joy, He seeks it in the joy of the church. The author of Hebrews says that it was for the joy set before Him that he endured the cross (Heb. 12:2). And what was that joy? That a host too great to be numbered would be reconciled to God and brought into his heavenly home forever through the ultimate sacrifice of his own body.

14. That's what it means to love your wife with an attentive love. We are called to be just as attentive to her needs as to our own. And as we do, we find that loving our wives is like loving ourselves. Pursuing her good is the same as pursuing our own good. Providing for her joy fills us with joy. Why? Because together we are one.

15. As John Piper writes: "If you live for your private pleasure at the expense of your spouse, you are living against yourself and destroying your joy. But if you devote yourself with all your heart to the holy joy of your spouse, you will also be living for your joy and making a marriage after the image of Christ and his church"<sup>2</sup>

16. So the golden rule of marriage is, "You shall love your wife as you love yourself."

18. Men, are you loving your wife with an Attentive love?

- Are you sensitive to her moods, her needs, her nonverbal communication?
- Are you courteous to her?
- Are you communicating? Are you sharing your life with her in words? Do you frequently tell her "I love you."
- Are you providing for her needs? Are you doing your best to provide a nice home environment for her to work in? She has a tremendously challenging assignment from the Lord. Are you taking that seriously?

19. These are all ways to approach your wife with an Attentive love. Finally, God calls us not only to a Sacrificial, Purifying, and Attentive love. He also calls us to a...

## IV. A Relentless Love (31-33)

Read v. 31-33

1. Men, if you desire to see Paradise Lost become Paradise Regained in your marriage, you need to love your wife with a Relentless love.

---

<sup>2</sup> John Piper, *Desiring God* 10th anniversary edition; p. 178

2. In these three verses Paul is addressing both the unity and the permanence of marriage.

3. He takes us all the way back to Genesis to make his point. After creating the first man and woman in the Paradise of Eden, God calls them to a “one flesh” relationship. A unity that is more intimate and permanent than the relationship a man or a woman had with their parents.

4. In fact, in God’s mind to enter a “one flesh” marriage relationship means to be both the beginning of one union and the dissolution of another. Husbands and wives are to “leave” father and mother, and “cleave” to one another.”

5. There are two things in marriage that can cause more harm than almost anything else. First, a husband or wife who can’t break free of momma's apron strings. And, second a mom or dad who can’t keep their nose out of their married child’s business.

6. But the Scriptures make it clear that when a man or woman marries, they are to sever the ties to home. In marriage a new family is begun. And as far as authority and responsibilities go, the old connections to mom and dad are over. Now don’t get me wrong, parents are always to be loved, honored and cared for, but they are not no longer in the driver’s seat with regard to the life of their grown and married child.

7. On the day a couple is married, the lines of loyalty and devotion shift from father and mother to their husband or wife. They each sever one set of ties and establish a new one. In fact, the new loyalty is henceforth stronger and more binding than the old one ever was.

8. Many times a lack of joy in the marriage stems from the fact that either the husband’s or wife’s primary loyalty and confidence remains tied to their mom or dad rather than to their mate.

- They prefer their parent’s counsel and advice.
- They are more devoted to meeting parental expectation than the needs of their spouse.
- They share more intimately with their parents than with the one to whom they married.
- And this almost always causes resentment, alienation and conflict.

9. But that’s not the way God designed marriage to function. To “leave” means to sever those old lines of authority and responsibility. To “cleave” means to glue or cement yourself permanently to your mate for life.

10. It means that no matter how difficult life becomes, you NEVER run home to momma. You NEVER complain to your parents about the behavior of your mate. You continue to pursue your mate with a relentless love that Never Contemplates Divorce.

11. How relentless should your love be for our wife, men? It should be as relentless as Christ’s love for this church. Have you ever considered how much sin and grief the Lord has to put up with in unfaithful people like us? And yet the thought of severing the relationship never crosses His mind. In Romans 5, Paul said that “even while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Even while we were belittling him, He gave his life for us. Even when we are unfaithful to Him, he

remains faithful to us. That's a relentless love.

12. In Rom. 8, Paul asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? No one and Nothing can separate us from His love.

13. It's a love that is permanent and unwavering no matter the circumstances.

14. Several years ago Robertson McQuilkin wrote a book called "A Promised Kept." McQuilkin had been the president of Columbia University for decades, but when his wife's Alzheimer's reached its peak, he chose to give up his very successful career to serve his bride. He tells it like this:

Eventually, I had to approach the board of trustees with the need to begin a search for my successor. I told them that when Muriel needed me full-time, she would have me. When the time came, the decision was firm, and it didn't take any heavy-duty calculation. Soon after the decision was announced I wrote a letter to our constituency: "Twenty-two years is a long time. And how do you say good-bye to friends you do not wish to leave? The decision to come to Columbia was the most difficult I have had to make; the decision to leave 22 years later, though painful, was one of the easiest.... Let me explain. My dear wife, Muriel, had been in failing health for about 12 years. So far, I have been able to carry both her ever-growing needs and my leadership responsibility at Columbia. But recently it has become apparent that Muriel is contented most of the time she is with me and almost none of the time I am away from her. It is not just "discontent." She is filled with fear - even terror - that she has lost me and always goes in search of me when I leave home. So, it is clear to me that she needs me now, full time. Perhaps it would help you understand if I shared with you what I shared in chapel at the time of the announcement of my resignation. The decision was made, in a way, 42 years ago when I promised to care for Muriel "in sickness and in health... till death do us part." So, as I told the students and faculty, as a man of my word, integrity has something to do with it. But so does fairness. She has cared for me fully and sacrificially all these years; If I cared for her for the next 40 years I would not be out of her debt. Duty, however, can be grim and stoic. But there is more: I love Muriel. She is a delight to me - her childlike dependence and confidence in me, her warm love, occasional flashes of that wit I used to relish so, her happy spirit and tough resilience in the face of her continual distressing frustration. I don't have to care for her. I get to! It is a high honor to care for so wonderful a person."<sup>3</sup> (A Promised Kept, p. 20-23)

15. Now there is a love that is relentless. And men, this is the kind of Love with which God has called us to love our wives. It is a love that is Sacrificial, Purifying, Attentive and Relentless. It is a love that we cannot offer our wives if we are not living a life that is filled with the Spirit. But it

---

<sup>3</sup> Robertson McQuilkin, *A Promised Kept*, p. 20-23



is a kind of love that will fill our homes with joy and reveal to the world and to our children how much Christ loves His church.

16. Men, do you want your marriage to move from Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained? Then love your wife the way Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

Christians proclaim the preeminence of Christ to the world by  
how we follow and lead.