

HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES! (COLOSSIANS 3:19a)

I want to start off this morning by *doing something* I don't ordinarily do—*give you the title* of my sermon right off the bat! Those *of you here* know what the title is because you have it on your *outline*—and in your *bulletin*. But our *on-line listeners* have neither one! So—for our on-line listeners this morning—here's the *title* of my message: *Husband, Love Your Wives!*

Why do I want the on-line listeners to know what I'm preaching on *before I start* preaching? Because I want *them*—and *you here* in the auditorium—to know that there is *something for everyone* in this message, regardless of your age, gender, or marital status! In other words, don't mentally "check-out" just because you are *not a husband!* The wives, of course, *wouldn't do that* anyway! They will be furiously taking notes to help their husbands *remember* how they are to love them!

Please take your Bibles and turn to Colossians 3. For the sake of context, I want to read once again Colossians 3:18-25. As mentioned a few weeks ago, David Pao—and others—point out that there are *three pairs* of relationships in these verses: wives/husbands; parents/ children; and slaves/masters. (*Exegetical Commentary on the NT—Colossians and Philemon*, page 260).

Pao then states: "All three pairs **begin with** a call to submit..."

--Vs 18: "Wives, **submit** yourselves unto your own husbands..."

--Vs 20: "Children, **obey** your parents..."

--Vs 22: "Servants, **obey** in all things your masters..."

But each of *these* commands—from God—are immediately followed by *more* commands—from God! And the "follow up" commands focus on the *responsibilities of the leaders* who are being *submitted to!* In other words, the "submission" commands do not stand alone—God gives us a sort of "checks and balances" in these relationships.

So *what is* "the check" to "balance" God's command for *wives to submit* to their own husbands? Notice what it says in verse 19: "Husbands, **rule** with an iron fist!" *Is that* what it says? **No; it does not!**

--And *it doesn't say*, "Husbands, **tread lightly** because 'if Mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy!'"

--What *does* it say? It says, "Husbands, **love** your wives, and **be not bitter** against them."

So for every "amen" that a husband is tempted to say *out loud* (or to himself) when he hears "wives, submit," there should be an "*Oh, my*—and "*Oh, no*"—when the husband realizes that God has given him *two* commands to keep him from *wrongly carrying out* his role as a leader.

What are the two commands? The first is, "Husbands, love your wives;" the second is "be not bitter against them." We are only going to look at the *first one* today. And—like last time—we're going to be spending a fair amount of time in the book of *Ephesians*. I'm also going to be *using a similar outline* to the one I used when we looked at the command for wives to submit to their own husbands two weeks ago.

First, **1. The husband's mandate to love his wife**

As stated a couple of weeks ago, a mandate is a *command*—not a suggestion. And I'm using that word because the verb "love" in verse 19—just like the verb "submit" in verse 18—is in the *imperative mood*—meaning it is a command! Here are a *few reminders* about commands:

--God doesn't *command us to do* something that we *naturally do!* For example, you will not find a verse in the Bible telling you to *love yourself!* Why? Because you *already love yourself!* So husbands are commanded to *love their wives* because they don't *naturally* do it; it is something they need to *work at*.

--A *second truth* about commands is this: God *commands us* to do something because He *expects us* to do it! In other words, loving our wives is a matter of *obedience*—not a matter of how *we feel!* And it is *possible*—with God's help—to *obey* this command, or God wouldn't have *given it* to us!

--*Third*, this particular command is in the *present* tense—meaning it is something we are to *continually* do. That means if you are *not loving* your wife, you need to *start*—and if you *are loving* your wife, you need to *continue!*

But sadly, far too many husbands will say something like: “I **used to love** my wife—but we have since ‘fallen out of love’—and I don’t believe we can ever get those feelings back.” Although that is often **said...and believed...** and sometimes used as a **reason** for divorce, it is **totally unbiblical!**

Why? Because the **Biblical definition** of love has nothing to do **with feelings!** And let’s not forget that God through Paul is commanding husbands to love the wife that their **parents probably picked out** for them—not a woman **they chose** for themselves!

So love is a **choice**—not a feeling—and a **command** to be obeyed. And I’m of the opinion that a high percentage of marriage difficulties would be solved if **husbands loved their wives** the way God tells them to!

But in order for husbands—and future husbands—to obey the **command** to love their wives, we need to **understand** what the word meant at the time the NT was written—which **may or may not be** the same thing we think it means now!

2. The meaning of love

At the time the NT was written, the Greek language used **five different** words to describe love. The Greek word used **here** is “ah-GAH-pay.” It is the **highest form of love** because it is the word used to describe **God’s love for mankind** when He came in the person of Jesus to die for our sins.

There are a number of lengthy, somewhat technical definitions of “ah-GAH-pay,” but I opted to share with you **two shorter, more practical ones** that still capture the Biblical meaning of the word.

--**Steven Cole** defines it as “*a self-sacrificing, caring commitment which shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved.*” Cole then adds: “While such love *results* in deep feelings, the core of it is not feelings **but commitment.**” (Bible.org; Lesson 25: Your Marriage: Better or Bitter? (Colossians 3:19)).

--**Dr. Ed Wheat** defines it simply as this: “the totally unselfish love that has the capacity to give and keep on giving without expecting anything in return.” (*Love Life for Every Married Couple*, pg 67).

A quick comparison of the two shows that both emphasize **sacrificial commitment** that results in **giving**—which is the way God demonstrated “ah-GAH-pay” love to us!

So for us to truly understand the meaning of “ah-GAH-pay” love, we need to consider...

3. The manifestation of God’s love to the unsaved

In the way of a reminder, in God’s eyes there are **two groups** of people—those that are **saved** from the future penalty of their sins—and those that are **not!** The Bible refers to these two groups in a number of different ways; here’s just a sampling:

--Believer vs unbeliever	Born again vs not born again
--Child of God vs child of the devil	Condemned not vs condemned already
--Converted vs unconverted	Forgiven vs unforgiven
--Having everlasting life vs having the wrath of God on them	Saved vs lost

As just mentioned, the “love” we are considering now is God’s love for the **unsaved**; meaning those who are **not** His children. What does God say about us in our **natural, unconverted state?**

--In Romans 5:6, we are called **ungodly**

--In Romans 5:8, we are called **sinner**s

--In Romans 5:10, we are called the **enemies** of God!

--Notice what God had Paul write about the unsaved in **Titus 3:3** “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.” Not a very flattering picture, is it?

Why does God call unsaved people **foolish...and disobedient...and deceived?** Because they are!

--Are you not **foolish** when your **very breath** is in the hand of God—and you **can’t keep yourself** alive for even **one second**—and yet you worship and serve things that **are created** instead of the **Creator?**

--And are you not **disobedient** when God has given you a Book to tell you how to **gain heaven**...and how to **avoid hell**...and how to **live your life** on earth, and you don’t care enough of what God says to open His Book?

--Are you not **deceived** if you think **your wisdom** is greater than God's wisdom—and that you can **tell Him** how you are going to get **into His heaven**?

--And are you not "**serving divers [various] lusts and pleasures**" when all you think about is the **temporary pleasures of this life**—and rarely think about meeting God in the **next life**?

I **could** go on because the verse keeps going—but I'll stop because I believe you get the point! What was **God's response** to mankind being foolish...and disobedient...and deceived...and serving divers lusts and pleasures? We're in Colossians 3; go back to Col 1:21-22. Here we see that God's response to our wickedness was **to send Christ to die in our place** so that we could be reconciled! Peter put it like this in **I Peter 3:18** "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God..."

Much more could be said but that, my friends, is a picture of God's love for sinful, selfish, self-loving, self-pleasing, and self-serving mankind!

What I want us to do now is turn to Ephesians 5 because it is here that we have...

4. The model of love toward our wives

Notice what it says in verse 25. **Who** is the model—**who** sets the example—of how husbands are to love their wives? **Christ**—as seen in Him giving Himself **to** and **for** the church! Not exactly new news, is it? Most of you have heard this verse—and most of you have an idea of how great Christ's love is for the church.

So how is **Christ's love for the church** different from **God's love for the unsaved**? Primarily in this way: God's love for the unsaved will **end someday**—but Christ's love for the church **lasts forever!**

--**When** will God's love for the **unsaved** end? The moment they die, right? If a person **dies unforgiven**, they will spend **eternity in hell**, separated forever from God and all that is good!

--**Why** will God's love for the unsaved end if they die unforgiven? Because God gives us **this** life—and **only this** life—to **receive Christ as our Savior** from the penalty of our sins. If we **reject** the gift of God's Son **in this life**, **God will reject us in the next**. In **John 14:6**, Jesus says, "...I am the way, the truth, and the life: **no man** cometh unto the Father, but by me." **No man** means **no one**—and **you will not be** the exception!

But Christ's love for **God's children**—those He has saved and granted forgiveness and eternal life—will **never end!** It will last forever! "*When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We've no less days to sin God's praise Than when we'd first begun.*"

I'll expand more on **how Christ loves** the church in a little bit, but before I do, I want us to notice...

5. The motive for loving our wives

Why should husbands love their wives? The **same reason** wives should submit to their husbands: Because **God says so!** And that's really **the only reason** we should need!

But...God gives us **another** reason here in Ephesians 5:26-27. In a nutshell, Christ loves the church because His goal for His people is **that they be holy!** He doesn't want His bride to look like she just came out of the pig-pen of the world! He wants her spotless, wrinkle-free, holy, and without blemish!

In just a moment, I'm going to share with you a couple of quotes from the **Puritan Richard Baxter**. Before I do, though, I want to share just a few words about **who the Puritans were**. Like the Pilgrims that came to America, they were godly people who were **persecuted for their desire** to use the Bible as their **sole role** of faith and practice. The biggest difference between the two was that the Pilgrims broke away from the established, denominational churches while the Puritans tried to "purify" them. Although often ridiculed, the Puritan pastors were incredibly godly men. J.I. Packer wrote: "The Puritans exemplified maturity; we don't. We are spiritual dwarfs.... The Puritans, by contrast, as a body were giants." (*A Quest for Godliness*, pg 22).

I said all that to say this: I have a **love-hate** relationship with the **writings** of the Puritans! **What I love** about them is how thorough they are! Dane Ortlund in his book entitled *Gentle and Lowly*, wrote: "The way the Puritans would write books is to take a single Bible verse, wring it dry for all the heart-affecting theology they could find, and, two or three hundred pages later, send their findings to a publisher" (pg 43). So for those of you who think I'm long and "wordy," I'm not even close to the long-windedness of the Puritans!

But here's **what I hate**—the **sinful part** of me, anyway: reading what they wrote is **incredibly convicting!** And here's a sampling of what Baxter wrote about the spiritual concern **husbands should have** for their wives!

A. Baxter on reading and friendships

“Help each other by reading together the most **convicting, cutting, life-giving books**. The ones most spiritual. Do not **waste your time** on light, weak, milk-toast ministries and books. Make friendships together with the **holiest** persons. This is not neglecting your duty to one another, but that all the helps working together may be the more effectual.” (Ephesians 4:11-16) (“THE MUTUAL DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES TOWARDS EACH OTHER,” Richard Baxter, 1615-1691)

B. Baxter on praying together—and in secret

“Join together in frequent and fervent prayer. Prayer forces the mind into sobriety, and moves the heart with the presence and majesty of God. Pray also for each other when you are in secret, that God may do that work which you most desire, upon each other's hearts.” (Cited above)

--**Anyone feeling convicted** besides me?

Lastly, let's consider... **6. The manner of loving our wives**

So **how**—in what manner—does Christ love the church? We already looked at the fact that He loves us **forever**—and we husbands **must have** the “till death do us part” mindset. Here are **three more ways** Christ demonstrates His love **toward us**—and husbands should demonstrate their love **to their wives**.

A. Sacrificially

--Vs 25. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it;”

Was there ever a **greater** sacrifice made than when God came to earth in the form of man, was abused and mocked by those He created, then died in their place so they could be justly forgiven?

There isn't one, is there? And let's not forget the **sacrifice it was for Jesus** just to become a man and voluntarily place Himself under the **limitations of humanity!** The One who **held the world** together by the word of His power had to get His **diaper changed!** The One who **created the human body** had to learn how to **walk!** And the One who **created human speech** had to learn how to **talk!**

--Surely then, husbands, you can **give up a hobby** for your wife—and/or some “big, boy toys.”

--Surely you should be willing to take over the **responsibility of watching the kids** when you get home from work—especially if your children **are young and your wife** needs a break!

--Surely you can **take care of her** when needed—just as she has **taken care of you** when needed.

The point, of course, is any so-called “sacrifice” we husbands make is **nothing** compared to the sacrifice that Christ made for us!

B. Unconditionally

--Is Christ's love for **you** conditional? In other words, does Jesus love us **only if we do** certain things? Jesus' love—praise the Lord—is **unconditional!** But what about you, husbands?

--Do you love your wife only if **she appreciates** all you do for her? I sure hope not because if Jesus **loved you** according to your “**appreciation level,**” you wouldn't like it!

--Do you love your wife only if she **loves you** in return? What if **Jesus loved you** in the **exact measure** as you love Him? Pretty safe to say you would be loved **much, much less** than you are! Please understand that we can never reciprocate the love that Christ has for us—but we certainly should be trying!

C. Patiently and Tenderly

--Is Christ **patient with you**—or does He rake you over the coals every time you fail Him? He doesn't, does He, and you need to treat your wife in the same way!

--Notice what it says in vs 28-29. Here we see a truth I mentioned earlier—that we **already love ourselves** and need to love our wives in the same way! What does that look like? **Nourishing and cherishing** our wives in the same way that Christ nourishes and cherishes us!

--So husbands, do you **cherish** your wife? Are you **patient** with her—and **tender** towards her? Are you treating her the way **you want to be treated**—and the way you want Christ **to treat you?**

Ephesians 4:32 “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

This last quote **from Baxter** certainly helps us keep things in the right perspective:

“Do not forget that you are both diseased persons, full of infirmities; and therefore expect the fruit of those infirmities in each other; and do not act surprised about it, as if you had never known of it before. **Decide to be patient with one another**; remembering that you took one another as sinful, frail, imperfect persons, and not as angels, or as blameless and perfect.” (“THE MUTUAL DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES TOWARDS EACH OTHER,” Richard Baxter, 1615-1691)

How did—and does—Christ love the church? Sacrificially...and unconditionally...and patiently...and tenderly. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it!”

So what would God have us do in light of what we’ve heard this morning?

1. First and foremost, all of us are in one of two groups: the “have’s” and the “have not’s!”

--You either have the Son as your Savior—and the forgiveness of sins—or you don’t!

--It is really that simple!

--And you cannot reject Christ—or be “neutral” about Him—and get into heaven!

--How do you “get” the Son? Come to Him in humility and repentance—and faith!

2. Second, how are you doing husbands? Are you loving your wife as you love yourself—and as Christ loved the church? Are you concerned for her spiritual well-being—or just taking care of her physical needs?

--And you should know that you cannot generate this supernatural kind of love on your own—you need God to create it within you!

3. Third—this is for all of us if you are a child of God. Christ’s goal for the church—for true believers—is that we be “holy and without blemish.” Is that your desire and goal?

--If not, it needs to be!