

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Colossians 3:18-21

Intro: The story of the human family is as old as time itself. There is no human institution that is older than the family. God made the first man, Adam, and then He made the first woman, Eve. God brought Eve to Adam, and charged them to be fruitful, and multiply. So God created the first man and the first woman with the ability to multiply. The result was that God Himself established the first family. In time Cain and Abel were born to Adam and Eve, and that is where the first children came from. So there were families before there was a nation. There were families before there was a Church. So the family is the oldest institution known to man, and it was established by God. Basically the family was a man and a woman who became a husband and wife. Sometimes a husband and wife are not able to have children, but they are still a family. But normally a family is a husband and wife who have children. It was not two men, or two women, but one man and one woman, and it is still that way before God.

This is what Paul had in mind when he wrote in our text first to wives, then to husbands, and then to children, and then to fathers supported by their wives. Frequently throughout history men have taken more than one wife, but that has never been God's will. The family is a husband and wife and children.

Now in Paul's epistle to the Colossians up to and including chapter 3, verse 17, Paul has been addressing all Christians individually. God does not have different standards for men and women. What men are to believe, women are to believe. And the way men are to live, is the way that women are to live. But we need to recognize that nobody but a Christian is going to believe what the Bible teaches as to the great fundamental doctrines of the Bible. And nobody is capable of living the Christian life but a person who has been saved, or born again. So we must assume, and correctly so, that when Paul wrote these words to parents and children, he was speaking of Christian parents who were seeking to raise their children to know the Lord, and to live godly lives. Probably most, if not all, of the parents in the Colossian church, had not been Christians when they were married. So it is clear that Christian families were to be very different from families who were not Christian. Sometimes one parent would be a Christian, but the other not a Christian. In such cases the Christian was faced with a major problem, but not an insurmountable

one under the blessing of the Lord. But this is why concerning marriage, or business, or other close relationships, believers were not to be yoked together with people who did not believe in Christ as their Savior. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth. See 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1, which begins in verse 14 with these words:

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? (2 Cor. 6:14).

Now many Bible teachers believe, and I believe with them, that there is a reasonable, logical order in the way in which the writers of Scripture have written the books of the Bible. Neither in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, not in this letter to the Colossians, was he writing a manual on marriage and/or how to raise a family. But at the same time the Apostle Paul has given us an orderly presentation of the truth. If Paul had started out in chapter 1 by addressing wives, then husbands, then children, he would have given the idea that all you need to know is what to do, and then do it! It is not that easy even for Christians. Paul first wanted them to be fully established in the teaching of Scripture, the doctrines, if you please, and then to go on to learn how to walk in obedience to the will of God and in fellowship with the Lord.

Whenever I am talking to a couple who want to be married, I seek to learn, first of all (if I don't already know), where they stand with the Lord. That is, are they saved, or aren't they? And if they are saved, I want to know if they are living for the Lord. What place does the Word of God have in their lives individually? Sometimes I have been fooled, and I don't really like to marry couples that I don't know. People will often tell you what they think you want you to hear just so you will tie the knot for them. In 1 Timothy 5:4 where Paul was addressing the children or nephews of a widow, he exhorted them to "learn first to show piety at home." And in Titus 2:4 and 5 where he was instructing the older women of the church how to instruct the younger wives, he said this:

4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed (Titus 2:4-5).

Now what goes on in our homes is very personal and private, and it should be. But we have been thinking together about seeking the things

which are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father. And we have been talking about putting off sins and putting on a holy character that is pleasing to the Lord. Now you and I know if we have been doing this, and our spouses know if we have been doing this. And the Lord certainly knows how things are going in our fellowship with the Lord. But we all need to realize that it is the godliness of our lives, not just the knowledge of what we ought to be doing, that will make our homes places of heaven on earth.

Now our relationship with our wives, men, or your relationship with your husbands, ladies, is going to be good or bad, a delight or just bearable, to the extent that we all are walking in fellowship with the Lord, strengthening our understanding of the truth, and doing what the Holy Spirit has told us in the Word how we should be living. Can we think of times in our lives when we enjoyed reading the Word, more than we do now? Or have we let other things, but plain busyness keep us from the Word of God and prayer? You see, it takes constant attention to the condition of our hearts to assure that the blessing of the Lord will continue in our lives. Has the study of Colossians changed my life at all? Has it changed your life?

I want to read to you a section from Bishop Handley Moule's book on Colossians which I have quoted from before. Bishop Moule was a bishop in the Church of England back in the days when the Church of England was blessed with godly ministers who sought to establish their people in holy living by their teaching and preaching of the Word of God. He believed that the verses that we come to on the home, were a major reason for the writing of this epistle to the believers in ancient Colosse. He called these expositions in Colossians as having to do with "Holiness at Home." And he said this:

Let us thank God for them, as for some of the chief treasures of His Word. For *on the one hand* (italics mine) the Christian Home is truly "the masterpiece of the applied Gospel"; the scene of the loveliest manifestations of its spirit, and then also the source, or reservoir, out of which its noblest influence is to flow all around. *On the other hand* (italics mine again) Home is the place of all others where it is most easy for us forgetful sinners *not* to live in the full light and power of the Gospel. It is the place where we most easily go off our guard; where small inconsistencies are most readily allowed to grow into habits; where the member of the circle may only too lightly act as if there were less need there than elsewhere of the fulness of the Spirit, the indwelling of the Lord in

the heart, the surrender of the whole life to God (pp. 232, 233)..
And then he concluded with these words:

It is a special gift, accordingly, this gift of the Master's precepts for our life in Him at Home. It is not for nothing that the New Testament has more to say in detail on this than on other particular aspects of Christian life, the ordained Ministry of the Church alone excepted. We might have looked for minute directions as to the Christian's conduct in the walks of business, for example. We have as a fact scattered precepts everywhere bearing on that field of duty; but we have nothing connected and combined upon it. It is as if the Apostle was led to emphasize holiness at home as not only beautiful and right in itself, but the true nursery of habits of holiness everywhere (p. 233).

What Bishop Moule was saying was that what we are at home, we are everywhere. And if we concentrate on holiness at home, the fragrance of such a life will be with us wherever we go.

So what Paul was saying in these verses was that we need to be especially concerned about holiness at home because if we have it there, we will have it everywhere.

So we can't come to these few brief verses without recognizing that what Paul was saying, in effect, was this: "Now take all of the truth I have taught you up to this point, and make sure that you see how it is connected with everything that has gone before. That is how we can tell that we are really profiting from the Word. Live it at home, and the fragrance of it will follow you everywhere you go. But let us beware of failing at home because we cannot compensate it regardless of how hard we may try.

Now I want to point out three features about what we have in these verses where Paul addressed the family first, and then he went on to speak of what our behavior should be in the workplace.

You will notice that the Lord did not tell the husband what the wife was supposed to do, nor the wife what her husband was supposed to do. He told the wife what she was supposed to do, and he told the husband what He was supposed to do. The same applies to children and fathers, and to servants and masters.

We are all self-appointed experts in knowing what someone else ought to be doing. But our primary responsibility is to make sure that we are doing what the Lord wants us to do. We all are personally and directly responsible to the Lord. The Lord characteristically uses our obedience to the Lord to provoke others to be obedient to Him, even those with whom we are in a close relationship like a wife and a husband. Perhaps you remember the proverb which tells us, “When a man’s ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov. 16:7). Many times I have heard either a wife or a husband say, “If she, or he, will do what he or she is supposed to do, then I will do what I am supposed to do.” But there is no basis in Scripture for saying such a thing. We are all to obey the Lord even if no one else obeys Him, and often our obedience is what the Lord uses to cause others to be obedient to Him as well.

The other point that is important for us to note is that contrary to the way most people live, and contrary to the way the world operates, the Lord places the main responsibility for obedience upon the one with the lesser responsibility in the relationship. Wives first. Children first. Servants first.

Abraham did this with Lot. David did this with Absalom. But by far the greatest Example of this is our own Lord Jesus Christ. He had all authority in heaven and earth, and yet remember what Paul wrote about the Lord in Philippians 2:5-8, and then 9-11. It is very hard for a person to demand their own rights when the one they are related to deliberately chooses to take the lower place. We never win by demanding that others submit to us, but we win by humbling ourselves before them.

The third point that I want to make about this passage that we all need to remember is that this is the will of God for us in our families. It is a known fact that there is much unhappiness in homes today, and this is not only the case in the homes of people who don’t know the Lord, but it is a fact in many homes where the husband and wife claim to be Christians. Some parents stay together just for their children. Others feel trapped in an unhappy situation. I don’t see any hope for people who don’t know the Lord, but I wouldn’t want to be in the ministry if I did not believe that there is hope, always hope, great hope for those who do know the Lord. But what we all need to do in marriage, as in every other situation where there is trouble, is to remember that our God is a good God, and His will is always “good, and acceptable, and perfect,” as Paul said in Romans

12:2. The focus in Scripture is always upon those of us who know the Lord. We need to take the initiative in obeying God, and in trusting Him to bring us the blessing that we so much desire, and originally felt that we would find in marriage. We can trust the Lord when we can't trust anyone else. And we need to trust the Lord as our only hope, because that is exactly what He is. So instead of turning to the Lord last, turn to Him first, and keep trusting Him by being obedient to His will. The Apostle Paul has told us many things in Colossians that we as the people of God are to do, and many that we are not supposed to do. What has our response been? The Lord has said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). And the Lord also told His disciples, "These things which I have said unto you, that ye may love one another, that ye may abide in the love that I have unto the Father, and that ye may abide in the love that I have unto you, that your joy may be full" (John 15:10). The Lord also said to His disciples in His last extended time with them before His death:

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full (John 15:11).

This applies to all of His Word to us. It is time that we believe His Word, act upon it, and trust God to give us the blessing that will glorify Him and satisfy us.