

**SPECIAL TARGETS OF THE DEVIL:  
WIVES AND HUSBANDS**

Colossians 3:18-19

**Intro:** When the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, he was compelled to address a very sad situation. A man in the church had committed adultery with his father's wife, probably his stepmother. Paul said that it was so shameful that it was "not so much as named among the Gentiles" (1 Cor. 5:1). And Paul was especially concerned about it because the church had not done anything about it. It is truly dreadful when the people of God commit any sin that the people of the world commit, but it is doubly shameful when a believer does something that unbelievers would not do. I won't deal with the rest of the story. If you are not acquainted with it, you can read it in 1 Cor. 5.

But this story had a good ending. The man was put under church discipline, but he repented of his sin and sought to be restored to the fellowship of the church at Corinth. Evidently some were still suspicious of him and may not have thought that his repentance was sincere. And so Paul warned the church that if they did not forgive him, they would be playing right into the hands of the Devil. And he expressed himself in these words which are found in 2 Cor. 2:10-11:

10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgive any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

This man had become a victim of Satan by the sin that he had committed, but now the church, if they were unforgiving and unwilling to restore him to fellowship, would be allowing Satan to take advantage of them. Satan is very, very clever, and if he is defeated by the man's repentance, he will try to damage the testimony of the church by their unwillingness to forgive him and restore him. No church ever wants to be in a position where Satan can take advantage of them. Neither does any believer want to give Satan an opportunity to take advantage of him, or her. Satan is an adversary, an enemy.

Now I have referred to all of this to point out what the Apostle Paul said about the Devil, or Satan. He said, "We are not ignorant of his devices." What did Paul mean by "his devices"? It is the Greek word νόημα, and it means *his thoughts, his purposes, his evil purposes*. Paul meant that we

know what he is up to. We know what he wants to do.

But you might ask, “How do we know? How did Paul know? How can we know?” The answer is: *It's all in the Bible*. Now I don't mean to say that there is a particular chapter in a particular book in which we learn all about what Satan is trying to do with us, but I do mean that throughout the Bible God has given us all of the information we need to know in order to be aware of what he is trying to do to us. It is not all in one place, but all that we need to wage a good warfare against the enemy of our souls, is there in the Word.

Now in our study of Colossians we have come to wives and husbands. We know that the home today is under greater attack than ever before. There are many, many husbands and wives who live together, but who are anything but happy. Divorces have become about as numerous as marriages. Adultery abounds among unmarried and married couples. The homosexual crowd is pressing for the recognition of what is definitely a perverted form of family life. And the tragedy is that often Christian couples are victims of the sins of the day.

When did the Devil wage his first conflict against a married couple? Most of you know that it was in the Garden of Eden at the very beginning of the human race. He approached Eve seeking to convince her that she could disobey God and be better off by doing it. He even told her that she could become like God if she ate of the forbidden fruit. She fell for what he said, and encouraged her husband to disobey God, and you know what resulted.

Now what does this tell us? It tells that after the Devil's rebellion against God, his first attack was made against the first man and his wife, and he began with the wife. And the Puritan, Thomas Brooks, who lived back in the 1600's in England, said, using the language of a fisherman, *the Devil showed Eve the bait, but not the hook*. Why was he successful? The answer is simple and very clear. He was successful because Eve, and then Adam, refused to obey the Word of God. The result has been the disastrous condition that really covers the world today. Man, with all of his apparent wisdom and spectacular achievements, is most certainly provoking the eternal judgment of Almighty God.

The first three chapters of the Bible ought to speak to us, and to every generation from that day to this, in a loud and clear manner. The Devil

knows that if he can destroy the home, he really doesn't have to worry about anything else. That is one reason why the Bible is so clear in its teaching about husbands and wives, and children. But most people don't read the Bible. We are told that over 90% of Americans believe in God, but how many live like they believe in God? And how many of them are concerned in their daily lives about pleasing God? Anybody who can't see what is happening to our marriages and homes and families today, probably can't understand much of anything else either. The Devil started by rebelling against God, and then he set out to destroy the family. And we have to admit that he has been very successful is what his purposes have been. God, for His own purposes, still permits the Devil to rule on earth as the god of this world, who blinds the minds of people to the truth of the Gospel. He is God's enemy, and he is man's enemy, and he is the Christian's enemy. And Thomas Brooks summarizes the work of Satan by saying, "From the power, malice and skill of Satan, doth proceed all the soul-killing plots . . . that be in the world" (p. 16).

This is what makes Col. 3:18 and 19 so very important.

I hope you remember that I mentioned that these verses belong where they are in Colossians, and the same is true of Ephesians, because the Apostle Paul was teaching us that the best preparation for marriage, and the surest foundation for a happy home, are when a couple, a man and a woman, have been saved as salvation is described in chapters 1 and 2, and are living to please God as in the first seventeen verses of chapter three, and they come to marriage knowing the Lord, walking with Him, to exercise one simple commandment each toward each other.

### **I. THE WIFE (Col. 3:18).**

The only way to be safe from "the wiles of the Devil" is to live in loving and humble obedience to God. I called it a simple commandment because it is easy to understand, but it takes the grace of God to be able to do it.

God made Eve to be Adam's helper, his strong helper. She is to do everything in her power to encourage him and to help him be obedient to the Lord. If she has come up in her own experience through the first two and a half chapters of Colossians, she has already learned to be submissive to the Lord. Now as a wife she is to live in submission to her husband. He is her head, and she is to be his greatest encouragement in a life of obedience to the Lord.

“As it is fit in the Lord.” The NASB translates this statement, “as it is fitting in the Lord. In Ephesians Paul told the wives to be submissive to their husbands “as unto the Lord.” Peter told those Christian wives who were married to unsaved husbands to “be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the Word, they also may without a word be won by the conversation (or, conduct) of the wives” (1 Pet. 3:1). If Eve had been submissive to her husband, she would have been submissive to what the Lord told him not to do.

A godly wife who concentrates on being submissive to her husband, is a great treasure, and she will exercise a great influence for good upon her husband. I know that there are questions that need to be answered, but the first thing every wife needs to do is to do what God says for her to do. A wife who refuses to be submissive to her husband, is opening the door for Satan to move in to take advantage of her disobedience. Always, always, always, there is nothing that a wife can do more to assure the Lord’s blessing upon her marriage than for her to live in submission to her husband.

But now this is only half of the story. The other half has to do with those of us who are husbands. And Paul is just as direct with the husbands as he has been with the wives.

## **II. HUSBANDS (Col. 3:19).**

“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.” But let’s look at the Ephesians passage and see what Paul said there. It is quite a bit longer than what he said here in Colossians. You will find it in Eph. 5 beginning with verse 25:

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).

Sometimes we might make it difficult for our wives to be submissive to us, but which one of us would say that we have measured up to the standard which the Holy Spirit has given to us. The Lord has set the standard so high, not because we will ever reach it, but so we will know that we need to be loving our wives more and more as long as we live.

Bitterness accomplishes nothing, but love never fails. And every Christian home is to be patterned after our Lord in His relationship to us as His church, His body. And husbands, the way we treat our wives will be a reflection of our understanding of the love that the Lord has for all of us. Can any of us honestly say that while we love our wives with all of our hearts, that we love them as much as the Lord manifests His love for us every day, and especially by the way He showed His love for us in dying for our sins?

But let us look at what the Apostle Peter said about husbands. You will find his words in 1 Pet. 3:7. Let me read them to you:

7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Peter did not use the word *love*, but what he described here is certainly love. A husband is to dwell with his wife “according to knowledge.” This must mean according to an understanding of the role that each has in this relationship. And this knowledge comes from the Word of God. And the words that follow indicate the knowledge that is to characterize their lives together. First, there is the physical concern: “Giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel.” The wife is weaker physically, but not necessarily spiritually. I have often felt that Lucille has stood up under the trials that we have faced in our marriage better than I have. But she is to be honored, honored before their family, honored before their neighbors, honored before other believers. Secondly, there is to be the recognition that spiritually the husband and wife are on the same ground, with the same spiritual resources. “Heirs together of the grace of life.” The Lord is the source of our strength that we might live together in a way that is pleasing to Him.

But notice Peter’s last statement: “that your prayers be not hindered.”

There are two things that every husband and every wife should seek to avoid. One is that we will not give the Devil the opportunity to take advantage of us, and secondly that we will live in such a way with each other that our prayers will not be hindered. Do you remember what happened to Adam and Eve after they had sinned against the Lord? They tried to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the Garden. Disobedience opened the door to the Enemy, and drove a barrier between them and the Lord as well as with each other.

You know, you can't be out of fellowship with your husband or wife, and still be in fellowship with the Lord. It is impossible. One great condition for answered prayer, is that everything is right with the Lord at home. The Lord has ordained that our homes should shelter from the storms of life, a foretaste of heaven on earth, the place where we want to be most of all. And our homes will be all of that if we will only live each day in obedience to the Lord's Word, and seeking to please Him first, and then each other second.

God has not promised us a trouble-free life. But He has promised us a happy life. And He has promised a life safe from the power of the Devil. But it all starts and continues at home, when as husbands and wives we make it our business to obey the Lord.

**Concl:** Let me close by reading what Peter wrote at the conclusion of his first epistle. It forms a fitting conclusion to what we have learned from the Scriptures is to be our main concerns as godly husbands and wives who earnestly desire the blessing of the Lord.

Read 1 Peter 5:5-11.

Wives and husbands have always been marked out as special targets by the Devil who wants to turn us away from the Lord and His Word. But as the Apostle John has said, "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4b).