

Colossians 3:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

Analysis

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

Paul addresses household relationships (vv. 18-4:1), called "household codes" (Haustafeln) in German scholarship. These weren't unique to Paul; similar codes appeared in Greco-Roman and Jewish literature, but Paul Christianizes them with "in the Lord" qualifications. "Wives, submit" (hai gynaiques, hypotassesthe, αἱ γυναῖκες, ὑποτάσσεσθε) commands voluntary self-ordering under husband's leadership.

"Unto your own husbands" limits scope—not all men, but their own husband. "As it is fit in the Lord" (hōs anēken en Kyriō, ὡς ἀνῆκεν ἐν Κυρίῳ) qualifies submission: appropriate, fitting, proper within Christian context. This isn't absolute submission (which belongs only to God) but submission as unto the Lord (Ephesians 5:22), reflecting church's submission to Christ. The command assumes husband's Christ-like leadership (v. 19); where this fails, submission becomes complex.

Historical Context

Ancient world featured strict patriarchy where wives were property with few rights. Paul's command for wives to submit wasn't revolutionary but maintaining social order. What was revolutionary: limiting submission to "own husbands" (not all males), qualifying it "as fit in the Lord" (Christ governs the relationship), and commanding husbands to love sacrificially (v. 19). Christianity elevated women's status while maintaining ordered relationships.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do you understand biblical submission—oppressive hierarchy or complementary roles reflecting Trinity?
2. What does submission 'as fit in the Lord' mean practically when husband fails to lead Christ-like?
3. How can churches teach this text faithfully while addressing abuse that sometimes results from distortion?

Interlinear Text

Αἱ	γυναῖκες	ὑποτάσσεσθε	τοῖς	ἰδίοις	ἀνδράσιν	ὥς
G3588	Wives	submit yourselves	G3588	unto your own	husbands	as
	G1135	G5293		G2398	G435	G5613
ἀνῆκεν	ἐν	κυρίῳ				
it is fit	in	the Lord				
G433	G1722	G2962				

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 11:3 (Parallel theme): But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

Genesis 3:16 (Parallel theme): Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

1 Timothy 2:12 (Parallel theme): But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

Esther 1:20 (Parallel theme): And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.

1 Corinthians 14:34 (Parallel theme): Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

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