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C0516 -- Apr. 20, 2005 – Ephesians 5:25-27 – Christ’s Love for the Church

Ephesians 5:22-23 ²² Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body.

Last week we began looking at the Divine Institution #2: the application of the filling of the Holy Spirit to Marriage. Last week the wives. Verse 22, imperative command to the wives, **submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.** **submit** is the word *hupotasso*, a military term meaning “rank yourself under a leader”. The leader here is **your own husband**, not other wives husbands. The way in which you are to do this is **as to the Lord**. As a wife you are to submit to your husband just as you would submit to the **Lord**. Not submitting to your husbands means your not submitting to the Lord but rebelling against Him. Therefore, submit to the Lord by means of submitting to your own husband. This is a middle voice meaning you take the action and you receive benefits from submitting. The benefits are the internal adornment of your soul before God and men. Submission is what makes a woman beautiful. True beauty is that which is in the inner heart and not just an outward display of jewelry, braided hair, etc...verse 23 gives the reason. It should be translated **because the husband is the head of the wife** rather than **for the husband is the head of the wife** because this is a causal *hoti* clause. The husband is the **head of the wife** by position. He does not have to earn this position; you as a wife are to honor him on the basis of God’s creation of man first and woman out of man. You may say “my husband doesn’t deserve to be honored as my head” but that is a most rebellious spirit and an ignorance of doctrine. God made your husband the head whether you like it or not. He holds that position by divine authority. That’s why verse 22 does not say, **wives, submit to your own husbands if he deserves it**. Instead it says **as to the Lord**. The **Lord**, who is **Christ** in the book of Ephesians is **the head of the church**. He is **the head of the church** by position because He was the firstborn from the dead (Col 1:18). So, the reason you are to submit to your own husband is because **the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head of the church**. Then Paul concludes v 23 by saying Christ **Himself** is

the Savior of the body. No perfect corollary for husbands here but an indirect application would say that the husband is supposed to protect his wife spiritually and physically. Protect her against false doctrine and protect her against dangerous people in this world or dangerous situations. You've got to be willing, as a husband to give up your life for your wife's life. Now, let's finish the wives in v. 24, a crucial part of this doctrine of submission.

cc cc

NSF

3SPMI

DSM

adv adv

NPF

Greek Text 5:24 alla os he ekklesia upotassetai to Christo, outos kai ai gunaikēs tois

DPM prep adjDSN

andrasin en panti.

Translation 5:24 But as the church submits to Christ, in the same way the wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

In the same way that **the church submits to Christ...wives should submit to their husbands.** How does the **church submit to Christ?** Ephesians 1:22-23 explained this ahead of time. Christ was given to the church as its head so that as God filled Christ with His moral excellence and power Christ could fill the church with His moral excellence, power, and spiritual gifts (4:15). As this takes place the church is enabled to live the Christian life as willingly **submissive servants of Christ.** When a wife submits herself to her husband she is enabled by her husband to develop her inner beauty and to prosper in all her works. As the church benefits by submitting to Christ so **wives** benefit when they submit to their own husbands. A submissive wife enhances her femininity, her marriage, and she does a fantastic service to her family and society and she is showing that she truly has made Christ Lord over her life.

This last phrase **in everything** could be confusing. It is difficult to know just how far **in everything** goes. Certainly the wife should not disobey commandments of God in order to submit to her husband. One must obey God before men (Acts 5:29). In other words, the wife should submit to her husband in everything that is not sinful, including abuse. A wife should never obey her husband when he commands her to do something against God's word. Nor should she crawl in a corner and get beaten to death. What **in everything** means is that the wife should submit to her husband fully, not partially. Just as the church is not to partially submit to Christ but fully submit to Christ in everything. Submission benefits the woman and her marriage just as it benefits the church and her marriage to Christ.

Two words of caution. First, the wife is not supposed to submit to her husband IF HE DESERVES IT. For example, many women say they don't have to submit to their husbands

because their husbands are not loving them. Just remember, when you refuse to submit to your husband you are refusing to submit to Christ. Your husband holds the position of headship by creation and nothing can change that no matter how he acts. The text even says the Christian wife is to submit to her husband no matter what and no matter whether he is a believer or not (barring sinful actions). Many Christian wives have even started using sex as a reward for their husbands to make them act the way they want them to act. This is a terribly manipulative device that undermines the headship of the husband. If a woman uses sex to gain a position of power, she is usurping the husband's authority. This is nothing different than calling the Pope "the vicar of Christ" and usurping Christ's preeminence! It is a treacherous act that denies creation and Christ's headship over the church. This technique is a strategy of the old sin nature and was the judgment on the woman for eating the fruit in Gen 3:16.

Genesis 3:16 Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you."

Susan Foh has argued persuasively that this curse is every woman's "urge for independence...a desire to dominate her husband" which is the opposite of submission. Contextually, this word is used again in Gen 4:7 of Cain's struggle with sin. "*Sin is crouching at the door, and its desire is for you, but you must master it.*" While the woman's curse is her urge for independence and domination, the husband is given the sanction to master her. Wives, it is every woman's curse to desire to dominate your husband. Some to a greater degree some to a lesser degree. But every woman has this desire. You may dominate him in the area of conversation. He can't get a word in edgewise. You may try to dominate him intellectually (I'm smarter than him). Most women try to dominate their husbands by manipulation; using sex, emotional outbursts, threats, and language games to manipulate their husbands to act certain ways. This is all an outworking of the curse in Gen 3:16. Many wives think, "Well, I have more education than him, I'm smarter than him, I read more than him, I have more Bible knowledge than him, therefore I ought to be the one making the decisions around here. I'm obviously wiser." The Bible says, "No". That's pragmatic thinking not scriptural thinking. You start doing that to your husband and he'll become a weak, passive, pudgy man. He'll creep into a corner and dry up. Unless he's got real guts and decides he's going to master you. The man must learn to master his wife like Cain had to learn to master sin. When this is done the benefits for both parties are immeasurable.

Second note of caution; the wife's submission to her husband is not supposed to be based on his demands but on obedience to the Lord. Husbands, you can't beat your wife up with these verses. You are not to beat them into submission. Being submissive to your husband

is a command of God. Wives can only submit if they train themselves to be filled by the Spirit. As a lady you must teach yourself to yield your will to the Lord's will. When you decide to do this you're going to see your husband blossom, you'll blossom, the joy in your life will increase as you fill the role God designed you to fulfill. Women should stop trying to fill the man's role which they were never meant to fill and start being who God designed women to be. Then we will have a true picture of biblical femininity and healthy marriages.

Now that we have established the responsibility of the wives let's turn to the husbands. In marriage husband and wife combine to form one perfect human being; the one is the complement of the other.

Notice, with all three groups Paul starts with the subordinate individual. In marriage he starts with the wife's responsibility then moves to the husband. With family he starts with the child's responsibility then moves to the father. With labor he starts with the slave and then moves to the master. Also, notice the amount of information devoted to each party. For example, look at Eph 6:1-4. Three verses are reserved for the child and only one to the father. That's a 3:1 ratio. Now look at Eph 6:5-9. Four verses are reserved for the slave and only one to the master. That's a 4:1 ratio. In both family and labor the Paul's emphasis is on the subordinate person's responsibility. But now turn to Eph 5:22-32, wives and husbands. Verse 33 is just a summary. Notice, we have three verses reserved for the wife and 8 verses reserved for the husband. The emphasis is reversed when it comes to marriage. In this case it's a 1:3 ratio with the husband's responsibility being the emphasis. This tells us that the husband's role in marriage is extremely important so Paul spends three times the amount of time on husbands than on wives.

art NPM 2PPAImp art APF conj conj art
NSM 3SAAI art

***Ephesians 5:25* Oi andres agapate tas gunaikas, kathos kai ho Christos egapesen ten**

ASF conj refproASM 3SAAI prep GSF

ekkleesian kai eauton paredoken uper autes.

Translation 5:25 Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.

The husband's responsibility is stated up front in command form. **Husbands, love your wives.** The word for **love** is *agapao* and is used six times in this section (5:25 (2x's); 5:28 (3x's); 5:33). *agapao* love means "to desire the highest good for the other person". The highest good for the other person is always God's will for their life. So, the husband is to always desire God's will for his wife. Additionally, *agapao* love, unlike *storge*, *eros*, or

philos love is “unconditional”. The wife is never commanded to love her husband with this kind of love. She is told to love her husband with a *philos* love, which is a friendly, welcoming love (Titus 2:4), but she is never commanded to love her husband with *agape* love apart from the believer-believer relationship. This kind of love is extended even to the undeserving wife. What this means is that the husband is to love his wife whether he thinks she deserves it or not. A husband’s love for his wife is never, NEVER supposed to be conditioned on whether she submits to him or not! This is similar to the wives submission to her husband. The wife’s submission to her husband is not conditioned on her husband’s response; likewise, a husband’s love is not conditioned on his wife’s response.

The verb **love** is a present active imperative in distinction from the wives command to submit which is a present middle imperative (v. 22). The distinction is this, the wife herself benefits when she submits to her own husband whereas the husbands do not receive an automatic benefit by loving their wives. When a woman submits to her husband it automatically adorns her internally. The husband receives no such automatic benefit. It is a present imperative indicating that the husbands love for his wife is to be a continual ongoing action. This is not a matter of emotion but a matter of the will. Of course emotions are involved. But husbands must align their will with the Lord’s will by being filled by the Spirit (Eph 5:18). It doesn’t matter how you angry you are as a husband your responsibility is to love your wife regardless of her actions.

As the wife is to love her **own** husband, so the husband is to love his **own** wife and not other women. This stresses monogamy (one-woman man; cf. 1 Tim 3:2). The last observation of this command for **husbands to love your wives** is that this command is absolutely unique. It is not found in the OT, it is not found in rabbinic writings, it is not found in the household codes of the Greek or Roman worlds. This is a revolutionary idea that required Christ’s love on the cross before it could come into history. A husband’s love for his wife is absolutely dependent on Christ’s love for the church which was demonstrated at Calvary. Next we have Christ’s illustration of the type of love a husband is to extend to his wife.

Ephesians 5:25-27 just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

This is the doctrine that undergirds the application in 5:25a and 28-32. So, tonight we will spend the rest of the time studying the doctrine of Christ’s love for the church so the

husbands can understand how they are supposed to love their wives. If we miss the doctrine then we'll miss the application at home. When a husband fails to love his wife it simply illustrates that he doesn't understand Christ's love for the church on the cross, in regeneration, sanctification and glorification. He doesn't understand the unconditional actions of Christ toward the church to create her, grow her, finish her, and present her as the beautifully adorned bride of Christ.

First of all, Paul uses an adverbial conjunction *kathos* which describes the manner in which husbands should love their wives. They should love them **just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her**. Compare this with chapter 5:2 where all believers are commanded to walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us. Whereas the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church notice that the man is NOT commanded to be the head of his wife but instead to love his wife. The man is the head by position in creation. He is not supposed to take this position, he already possesses it. That is the reason the woman is supposed to submit to him. But the man, being the head of the wife, and being the stronger vessel, is commanded to love His wife in the same way that **Christ loved the church**. The word **loved** here is *agapao* and is an aorist tense pointing to the cross of Christ. Where did Christ demonstrate His love for the Church? On the cross (cf. 5:2 individuals). Of great interest is the fact that this is the only place in the entire NT where it is said that Christ loves the Church. What is the evidence that he loved her? The evidence is that He **gave Himself up for her**. He did not love only in word and tongue but in deed and truth (1 John 3:18). Christ acted on His love. This too is an aorist tense pointing back to the cross of Christ. Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." The cross was the supreme demonstration of love. He didn't only die for individuals; He also died for the Church. He didn't only have you as an individual in mind but He also had the entire completed Church in mind on the cross. The verb **gave**, *paredoken* is active in voice indicating that Jesus Christ took the initiative in handing Himself over. This fits well with John 10:18 where Jesus said of His life, "*No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.*" When He did this He was doing the Father's will. When husbands love their wives in this manner they are doing the Father's will.

If this is the model of love that a husband is to follow then a wife's submission to her husband can never mean slavish force because the church never feels slavishly forced by Christ. It must mean something different. Christ loved the Church, not because it was perfect but in order to make it perfect. Husbands should not love their wives because they

are perfect but to enable them to grow toward perfection. Christ's plan for perfecting the Church is given next

conj ASF 3SAASubj AAPartNSM art DSM art GSN
prep DSN

Ephesians 5:26 hina auten hagiase katharisas to loutro tou udatos en rhemati
Translation 5:26 in order that He might sanctify her having cleansed her.

Three goals of Christ's love for the Church

- 1) sanctify her
- 2) present her
- 3) holy and blameless

The first goal of Christ's love is to sanctify her. **her** is emphatic showing the importance of the Church to Christ. The main verb **sanctify** (*agiaze*; Aorist Active Subjunctive) means "to set apart for some special purpose". In Ephesians the church is being built up for a special purpose. That purpose is found in Eph 2:22. The church is being built up to be a dwelling of God the Spirit. Of course, a dwelling of God the Spirit must be holy. So, the first goal of Christ's love is to set the church apart to be a dwelling for God the Spirit. Paul then uses a participle of means to describe how the church will be sanctified. Whenever you have a participle that follows the main verb it logically precedes the action of the main verb though its action may be simultaneous. This aorist participle of **cleanse** points to the cross. Logically, Christ's death on the cross had a cleansing affect on the church which leads to the sanctification of the church (constative aorist). Cleansing deals with the negative, the removal of sin, sanctification deals with the positive, the producing of holiness. How did Christ cleanse the Church?

with the washing of the water connected with the word. The word **washing** refers to "taking a bath". Here, it is not the individual that is washed with the water but the whole church. This cleansing effect is analogous to God's marriage to Israel in

Ezekiel 16:8-14 ⁸ "Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you [word] so that you became Mine," declares the Lord GOD. ⁹ "Then I bathed you with water, washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil." ¹⁰ "I also clothed you with embroidered cloth and put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet; and I wrapped you with fine linen and

covered you with silk. ¹¹ "I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands and a necklace around your neck. ¹² "I also put a ring in your nostril, earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. ¹³ "Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour, honey and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. ¹⁴ "Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you," declares the Lord GOD.

God set Israel apart first by making a covenant with her. That's the word to Israel in v. 8. Then, God bathed the blood-stained Israel with water and adorned her with the finest clothes and materials making her a beautiful queen. The Church being washed with water is analogous to the cleansing effect of Christ's death on the cross which sets us apart to God. Lastly, what does **the word** have to do with this washing? The term used here is *rhema*. I've translated this **in connection with the word**. The cleansing that took place by means of the washing of the water is **in connection with the word**. *rhema* refers to the "preached" or "spoken word of God". Apparently, the church was cleansed by the washing of water **in connection with** the preached **word** of Christ. This basically means that **the word** of God in connection with Christ's death on the cross was the instrument that cleansed the Church. These two elements are connected with sanctification. For example, Christ prayed "sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth" (John 17:17).

conj3SAASubj NSM refproDSM AdjASF art
 ASF part PPartASF ASM
Ephesians 5:27 hina parastese autos eauto endoxon ten ekklesian, me echousan spilon
 conj AFS conj pro art GPN conj conj 3SPASu NSF conj NSF
he rhutida he ti ton toiouton, all hina he agia kai amomos.

Translation 5:27 in order that he might present her to Himself the church, glorious, not having a blemish or wrinkle or any such thing, but in order that she might be holy and blameless.

The second goal of Christ's love is found in v. 27. Remember, the first goal of Christ's love was to sanctify her; set her apart. To do this Christ cleansed her by His sacrificial death in connection with the preached word of God. This leads to a second or ultimate goal which is to **present the church to Himself in all her glory**. This refers to the universal church. The ultimate goal of Christ's love is to present the completed Church **to Himself**. The completed church is composed of all believers from Pentecost to the pre-trib Rapture in their resurrection bodies. This has yet to happen but one day we will all be presented **to**

Him in all our glory. Notice, Christ's love is that which sanctifies us and that which **presents us to Himself.** He is the preparer of the Church, the presenter of the Church and the recipient of the Church. **in all her glory** refers to the completed Church's character. The nature of the Church's glorious character is described next.

First it is describe negatively and then positively. Negatively, the church will **not have blemish or wrinkle or any such thing.** All three words probably refer to the physical appearance of the completed Church. This is one aspect of her glory. The word *spilon* (blemish) indicates there will be no blemishes on the body. The *rhutida* (wrinkles) refer to the imperfections in the skin when we get old with age. Christ's death will have cleansed the completed Church from every scar, defect and wrinkle in the body. To make sure Paul gets it all he uses the catchall phrase **or any such thing.** There will be no imperfections when the Church is completed. She will be a **glorious** body. Lastly Paul gives the third goal of Christ's love. Christ loved the Church **in order that she might be holy and blameless.** The two Greek words used here **holy and blameless** are also found in chapter 1:4. Turn to Ephesians 1:4 in relation to our individual election. Here we have the goal or purpose of election. Paul says,

Ephesians 1:4 He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love. (my translation)

There are two differences between Eph 1:4 and 5:27. In chapter 1:4 the nouns are all plural meaning that he is talking to individuals, whereas here in chapter 5:27 Paul uses singular nouns meaning that he is speaking to the corporate church. Second, in chapter 1 individual believers are to be holy and blameless before God but here in chapter 5 the church is to be holy and blameless before Christ. To be **holy and blameless** points to the spiritual and moral condition of the church. Spiritually and morally Christ's love has as its' goal that the completed Church will be **holy and blameless.** This requires that each believer be perfect in Christ (2 Cor 11:2; Col 1:28).

“The allusion to the church's holiness and blamelessness is important not only in the immediate context but it also serves as a climax to the argument and theology of the whole book. In Eph 1:4 God chose believers in order that they might be holy and blameless before him in love, all this is accomplished by the father's selection, Christ's redemption, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit (1:4-14). This is achieved by giving new life to sinners (2:1-10) and placing them into a new entity, the church, a body composed of believing Jews and Gentiles (2:11-3:13). This new body of believers is to live in unity (4:1-16), holiness (4:17-32), love (5:1-6), light (5:7-14), and wisdom (5:15-6:9). Finally, that which was planned

in eternity past (1:4) will be accomplished when Christ presents to himself the church that is holy and without blame (5:27).”ⁱ

These three goals must be met in Christ’s body. In the present Christ’s body is being built up to the mature stature of Christ but once built up Christ’s body will become His bride. This, of course, refers to a future day sometime during the Tribulation in heaven (Rev 19:6-8).

In conclusion, Paul has just commanded husbands to love their wives. The model of this love is Christ’s sacrificial love for the church. Christ’s love for the church had three goals. First, to sanctify her with a second, ultimate goal of presenting the Church to Himself in all her glory, with no physical, spiritual or moral imperfections but full perfection. Next Paul turns to applying this doctrine to the husbands love for his wife.

ⁱ Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 761.

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