



Ephesians

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For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Ephesians 5:23

This verse now explains the words of the previous verse, which said –

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”

Wives are to submit to their husbands because “the husband is the head of the wife.” This thought is in line with the words of 1 Corinthians 11:3. There Paul said, “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God.”

There is a divine order in how God has structured humanity, and how He has ordained the family unit. When this structure is violated, it upturns what is right and appropriate. And there, in turn, comes a breakdown in the family. If this is the common practice of a culture or society, that society will also break down. A clear and evident proof of this is found in the breaking down of America as the nuclear family is likewise being broken down. Culturally, we are casting off what God has ordained and society is feeling the negative effects of this.

Paul explains this hierarchy further with the words, “as also Christ is the head of the church.” Christ has direct and rightful control over the church. He is its Founder and Leader. All that occurs within His church is ordained by Him. Likewise, the man is to be the head of the wife. It is he who is given direction of family matters, and control of the household belongs to him.

As a note of comparison, Paul then finishes his thought with, "...and He is the Savior of the Body." In these words, various scholars find disagreement in how they are to be translated. Some make them out as a contrast by changing "and" to "but." In other words, The man is the head of the household just as Christ is the head of the church, but Christ is the Savior of the body (meaning there is a distinction being made between the two heads).

Others see an analogy in this. Just as Christ is the Savior of the body in a spiritual sense, the husband is to be the savior of the household. He is to lead in religious matters, he is to be the protector of the family, and he must be willing to die for them if necessary. If not he, then who is their defender? This view seems more appropriate, and it is actually fortified in verse 25.

Life application: It is the duty of the man of the house to lead the house. He is ordained by God with a right, a dignity, and with authority to serve in this manner. Men are the seat of reason. On the contrary, women are more led by emotion. God has determined that the man's makeup is that which is preferred for leadership.

Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.* Ephesians 5:24

The word "Therefore" is given to show us a conclusion based on what was said in the previous two verses. Christ is the Head of the church, and the church is subject to Him in all ways. In the same manner, as laid out by God's divine hierarchy, wives are also to submit "to their own husband in everything." This obviously excludes anything which is contrary to the will of God. No person is to violate their duty to God in order to be subject to another, regardless of what their position is.

Thus, the statement leaves the wife with the following hierarchy of priorities -

- To God
- To her husband
- To herself

What an unhappy verse for the world today! There is talk of freedom from the bonds of marriage. There is talk of the woman running the house. There is the notion that any "god" is simply an evolutionary process which randomly and chaotically brought us to the state we are in, and thus there is no real difference between people. Any perceived difference, such as biological sex, can be corrected through surgery and medicine. Therefore, we are actually all on equal footing and thus no hint of submission is necessary.

But the Bible speaks otherwise. No wonder it is so maligned and railed against! How dare the "God" of the Bible mandate something which places the female in submission to her husband! But, by casting off these supposed shackles, it is we who will suffer. Only a breakdown of that

which is moral, just, and honorable can result from being disobedient to the will of God as is laid out in Scripture. Let us endeavor to heed these words and act in accordance with God's perfect will.

Life application: Because of the established hierarchy in the family, the need to honor God through proper direction of His will is up to the husband. Should he force the wife to submit in a way which is contrary to what He commands, it can only lead to a breakdown in the family and harm for all concerned.

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

In verses 25-27 we will see the stages of salvation presented to us. In verse 25 is the giving of Christ for us – justification. In verse 26 is the work of being cleansed by the water of the word – sanctification. And in verse 27 we will see the presentation of the church in glory, holy and without blemish – glorification. It is through this work of Christ that Paul now says, “Husbands, love your wives.”

There was the duty of the wife to submit to the husband just as the church submits to Christ. But the husband is not without direction. Rather, he is to not lord his authority over the wife, but rather is to love her “just as Christ also loved the church.” In Ephesians, we see on several occasions that Christ sees Himself not fully complete without the church. In Ephesians 1, it says –

“And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Ephesians 1:22, 23

Later in this chapter, we will read –

“For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church.” 5:29

We are the body of Christ, and He loves us as such. Likewise, the husband is to so treat his wife. This love of Christ for the church is so deep that He “gave Himself for her.” Thus, He has given the husband the pattern of how he is to also act towards his bride. His love is to be a self-sacrificing love that says, “No matter what the cost, I will honor this woman that God has given to me, even to death itself.”

Life application: A husband who abuses his wife, or who treats her less honorably than the most precious jewel that he could possess, is not honoring the Lord through his marriage. Paul's words are imperatives for us to live by, not shun. When we fail to honor our spouse in the way that Scripture states, we are being disobedient servants of the Lord.

...that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,
Ephesians 5:26

There are subtleties here that need to be looked at carefully. First, this verse is speaking of Christ's love mentioned in the previous verse. It is then being made as an example to husbands for how they are to treat their own wives. Christ "gave Himself" for the church "that He might sanctify and cleanse her." The words actually should be rendered "...might sanctify having cleansed her."

We are cleansed through the work of Christ. We stand forgiven and justified before God because of the giving of His life. In that act, we are sanctified "with the washing of the water by the word." There is a two-fold aspect of sanctification that the Bible speaks of. The first is that we are sanctified, "set apart" unto God, through the work of Christ. There is also a sanctifying process which is on-going in nature which we actively participate in. This is actually seen in Jesus' words of John 13:10 –

"Jesus said to him, 'He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.'"

It is further explained in John 17:17 –

"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

We are cleansed (having bathed); we require sanctification (periodic washing). It is a two-fold and distinct process. The original picture of this goes all the way back to the book of Exodus and the ordination of Aaron and his sons for the priesthood of Israel. They were fully washed and consecrated as priests in Exodus 29. However, they were instructed that they were to continue to wash their hands and feet at regular intervals in Exodus 30. Those washings made specific pictures of Christ and His work, both for our cleansing and our on-going sanctification.

It is these most important points which are seen here, and which explain very carefully what Christ has done for us. It also shows what He will continue to do for us if we apply His word to our lives. This "washing of the water by the word" is what occurs when we hear the word, the gospel of our salvation, and then accept it. At that moment, we are saved by God and sealed with the Holy Spirit. This is the baptism of the Spirit. The rite of water baptism is an outward demonstration of the inward change which has already occurred. It is not specifically what is spoken of here. The spiritual baptism, and on-going spiritual cleansing, is the reference being made.

Again, these words are given to us as an example of what Christ did for us, and thus what the husband is to do for his wife. Just as Christ gave Himself up for us in order for us to be a

perfect and spotless bride, so husbands should be willing to expend themselves for the sake of their precious wives.

Life application: We have been cleansed by the work of Christ. We are also to grow in Christ through the study and right-application of His word. Let us endeavor to do these things and not allow ourselves to get pulled back into the world from which we are called out.

...that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. Ephesians 5:27

The full thought should be considered to understand the context –

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

Christ gave Himself for His beloved church in order to make her ready for Himself. He has given us His word to prepare us for our union with Him as well. All of the ceremony stems from Him and is directed by Him. It will even be that He will “present her to Himself a glorious church.”

This role of His is what is known as a *paranymp*. It is “a ceremonial assistant and/or coach in a ceremony. In ancient Greek weddings the bride and bridegroom were attended by paranymps, and from this use it has been generalized to refer to attendants of doctoral students, best men, and bridesmaids in weddings and the like. It can refer specifically to the friend of a bridegroom tasked with accompanying him in a chariot to fetch the bride home.” Christ is the One who will accomplish this fetching of the bride home, there to present her to Himself. But He is also the one who gave Himself for her, sanctified her, and cleansed her. In all matters, He is the One who has directed the affairs of the bride so that she will “not have spot or wrinkle or any such thing.”

The idea of a “spot” is that of sin. It is the Greek word *spilos*, and it is only found here and in 2 Peter 2:13. The spots on a garment would reflect impurity of that garment. The literal spot is used as a metaphor for moral imperfection, and thus sin. In Christ, our garments are made spotless; we are brought to a state of sinless perfection.

The idea of a “wrinkle” is that of the consequences of sin – getting old and dying. The word for “wrinkle” is *rhutis*, and it is only found here in the Bible. It is the sign of aging. This will no longer be evident. Our old nature in Adam will be removed, and we will be forever in a state of youthful vitality. No wrinkle of Adam will be detected.

Further, Paul continues by stating that there will not be “any such thing.” There will be nothing which detracts from the beauty of Christ’s bride. We will be wholly undefiled, perfectly radiant, and eternally set in our status as Christ’s precious bride. We shall be “holy and without blemish.”

No error or fault will remain in us when we are presented. This idea hearkens back to the sacrifices of the Old Testament where animals were to be “without blemish” when presented as an offering to the Lord. They were to have no marks which detracted from their perfection. So will the bride of Christ be when we are presented to Him. This is spoken of in Revelation 19-

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

⁸And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” Revelation 19:7, 8 (KJV)

Life application: Christ has done His part for His bride, and He will continue to do so for her until the wonderful day when He presents her to Himself. As this is so, shouldn’t we be endeavoring to do the same? Let us strive for perfection which, even if it is unattainable in this life, is what our Betrothed would ask of us.