

“Christ Our Head”
Ephesians 5:23
(Preached at Trinity, September 13, 2015)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Paul has been instructing his readers on living out the reality of their Christian conversion. The Christian life is a display of God's transforming grace. The Gospel changes everything in our life. In **Verse 18** Paul charges his readers: "be filled with the Spirit."
Verse 21 serves as a transition verse introducing the large section describing how the Spirit filled life leads us as we interact with one another. He enables us to walk in meekness and humility. He enables us to live in submission to one another.
Ephesians 5:21 NAU - "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."
2. The Gospel changes every human relationship. In **Verses 22-33** Paul describes the affect the Gospel has upon marriage. It transforms the relationship of husbands and wives. While the Gospel is transforming it doesn't rule out the need for sound teaching. In fact Christian instruction is essential to the maturing of every believer. Christian conversion makes us teachable.
In these verses Paul gives instruction to wives and then he turns to instruct husbands. His charge to wives is to live in submission to their husbands. He then declares that this interaction is shaped by the Biblical principle of headship.
Ephesians 5:23 NAU - "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."
3. A right understanding of this passage is dependent upon a right understanding of the principle of masculine headship.
 - A. Paul states here that one of the reasons a wife must submit to her husband is because he is her head.
Ephesians 5:23 NAU - "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."
 - B. Last time we examined the principle of masculine headship. It goes back to creation. We saw it as God's design for men and women. Although they are both made in the image of God, they are different and serve different functions. The man has been given the place of leadership and dominion upon the earth.
4. One of the glorious aspects of this passage is Paul's Christological focus. Paul was always Christ centered in everything. He told the Corinthians:
1 Corinthians 2:2 NAU - "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."
5. As I take us through this passage I'll also maintain this Christological emphasis. As Paul instructs wives to be submissive to their own husbands he reminds them to look to Christ.
Eph. 5:22 NAU - "Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord."

6. As the wife ponders the role of her husband as her head she should look toward Christ as Head of the Church. Christ is the head of the church and so He is *her* head.
- A. The headship of Christ is unique.
Paul makes a comparison between the headship of the husband and the headship of Christ. He uses the Greek comparative particle $\omega\varsigma$. It is often translated “like” or “as.” The wife’s husband is her head “like” Christ is the head of the church.
- B. Paul also uses this word **Verses 22 and 24** to stress the high charge upon wives to maintain a heart of submission to their husbands.
Eph. 5:22 - "Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord."
Ephesians 5:24 NAU - "But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything."
7. Wives are to submit to their husbands because God has given them headship in a way similar to the headship of Christ.
Ephesians 5:23 NAU - "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church
8. Obviously, the husband doesn’t have headship in *exactly* the same way Christ has headship. The headship of Christ is unique and cannot be duplicated. Paul is merely comparing the submission of wives to their husband with the submission of the church to Christ.
9. This morning I want to pause in our survey of marriage to look at the uniqueness of the headship of Christ. This is the third time in the Book of Ephesians Paul has drawn our attention to the headship of Christ. Paul always held high the supremacy of Christ.
Ephesians 1:20-22 NAU - " which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church"
Ephesians 4:14-15 NAU - " As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ"
10. This morning I want to set before you a summary of the headship of Christ.
- I. Christ is life-giving head of the Church
- II. Christ is the ruling head of the Church
- III. Christ is the mediatory head of the Church
- I. Christ is life-giving head of the Church. Jesus is the organic head of the church
- A. Over and over we are referred to as the body of Christ
1. In our physical body our head directs everything in the body; the body cannot exist without the head.
 2. We are uniquely united to Christ. Our union with Christ is as real as the union of our head to our body.
 3. Just as the head is essential to the life of the body so Christ is essential to the church. And He is essential to our Christian life. We receive our lifeblood from Him.
 4. Jesus taught this.
John 15:5 NAU - "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

5. I clear vines from a tree or a fence by simply cutting the base at the root.
- B. One of the distinctives of our church is “Christ Centered” To declare our church to be Christ Centered is a declaration that He is at the heart of everything we are and everything we do.
1. As a church we find our being in Him. He is our strength. Without Him we cease to be.
 2. In **Rev. 3** the Church of Laodicea was in a horrible condition. They were no longer united to Christ. They were empty, poor, blind, and naked—and they didn’t even know it.
Revelation 3:17 NAU - "Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked"
 - a. They were headless. Their source of life was gone.
 - b. A church without Christ as head is a dead church – a church without life.
 - c. Paul warned about this in Colossians
Colossians 2:19 NAU - "not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God."
 - d. We must never forget that every aspect of our Christian life flows forth from our head. He is the source of every ministry in our church. He is the purpose. He is the goal.
 3. As Christians we are forever inseparable from Him. But we can be distanced from Him by our sin. And we can also draw near to Him.
James 4:4-8 NAS - "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? ⁶ But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." ⁷ Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."
 4. What is the source of your hope? Upon what do you trust? What do you do when you fail? Do you try to do better so you can rest upon your improvement? Or do you go to Christ resting upon His transforming grace?

II. Christ is the ruling head of the Church

- A. He is our King
1. He governs us. He has absolute authority over us
Matthew 28:18-19 NAS - "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations"
 2. One of the great statements of the Christian faith is, “Jesus is Lord.” It is one of the earliest Christian creeds

3. After the ascension of Christ He returned to His throne of glory where He rules with authority and dominion. Every believer willingly and joyfully places himself under this authority or Lordship.
- B. This is the sense Paul is setting forth in this passage – **Verses 22-24**
1. Christ is our ultimate, absolute authority – but He has delegated this authority to earthly leaders. We are naturally lawless. Jesus says, as you obey Me obey those whom I choose to lead you
 - a. There is civil authority
Romans 13:1-2 NAU - "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves."
 - b. There are ecclesiastical leaders
Hebrews 13:17 NAU - "Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."
 - c. Then there is the family. The husband/father has been given authority over the home. Children are to be in submission to their parents. Wives are to be in submission to their husbands
 Christ is the motive behind your submission

III. Christ is the mediatory head of the Church

London Baptist Confession of 1689 (Chapter 8:1) – “It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, according to the covenant made between them both, to be the mediator between God and man; the prophet, priest, and king; head and savior of his church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world. . .”

- A. It is important for us to have an understanding of Federal Headship – by this we are to understand representative headship
 1. Understanding this subject is essential to understanding the essence of soteriology or the doctrine of salvation. You will not understand the essence of original sin, the nature of the substitutionary atonement or the doctrine of justification by faith if you don't get this.
 2. And you'll never understand the nature of covenant theology without a clear understanding of this doctrine.
 3. Federal headship is representative headship
 - a. We have a representative form of government – the federal government consists of elected officials who represent us
 We suffer or prosper under their representation
 - b. When our ambassador signs a document he represents us and we are bound by his actions.
- B. Adam was the federal head of all of humanity – he represented all of his posterity in the Covenant of Works

1. God threatened death to Adam if he disobeyed
Genesis 2:17 NAU - "but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."
 2. When Adam sinned we sinned in him. He represented us
As the representative of all humans, Adam's act of sin was considered by God to be the act of all people.
Romans 5:12 NAU - "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--"
 3. Paul is speaking of all men being represented by Adam and thus sinning in Adam – Paul is speaking of universal guilt—guilt by imputation.
- C. The nature of imputation
1. To impute means to lay to another's account. Judicially and theologically it means to attribute something to another as the meritorious grounds for reward or punishment.
 2. Since Adam's sin is imputed or attributed to us we are legally guilty. We will justly receive all of the penalties that it deserves. This is testified by the universal reality of death.
Romans 5:12 NAU - "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--"
- D. There is a much greater imputation
Romans 5:18-19 NAU - "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."
1. Jesus is the Federal Head of the church
 2. He took our place in order to deliver us from sin
His righteousness is imputed to us and He bore our sins upon the cross.
 3. This is at the heart of justification. It is righteousness received by faith.

Conclusion:

1. We receive our life from Christ our head. He is our Lord, our King
2. We follow Him and seek to live for Him. Paul is saying that our obedience to Christ provides our motivation for seeking to submit to the various authorities He places before us.
3. I've known Christians who refuse to pay their taxes. That is a contradiction. Many years ago I used to own a radar detector. That is a contradiction.
4. Submission is hard. It is hard for wives to submit to their husband. God warned Eve of the struggle.
Genesis 3:16 NAU - "To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you."
5. Only a relationship with Christ can give us hearts of submission.
Ephesians 5:21 NAU - "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."