

HUSBANDS, WIVES, CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

WILLIS 10/16/11

Ep5:21-33

As we approach this passage today we must do so in light of the context Paul established in ch. 5:1 where he exhorted us to “Be imitator’s of Christ.” Now 21 verses later he is still making contextual application as to what imitation looks like on a practical basis.

- In v.21 he says, to be imitators of Christ we must all “be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.” **Mutual submission in the fear of the Lord is the eternal structure of imitation. Where mutual submission is not the heart disposition, anarchy prevails.**
- Mutual submission in the fear of the Lord is the foundation of all positional submission. Whether it is home, Church, government or marketplace mutual submission is what paves the way for an assumption of good will.
- All of which is done in the fear of the Lord not for the sake of each other. **Mutual submission has to do with Kingdom order. When we are in order with the Kingdom we receive the blessings of the Kingdom.**

From that foundation of mutual submission Paul continues to make contextual application of our imitation of Christ. In vs.22-25 he says for wives to imitate Christ they must be “subject to their own husbands as to the Lord...and husbands must love their wives as Christ loved the Church...”

- **This in no way implies that women are to be subject to all men. Wives are to be subject to their own husbands.**
- Submission to her husband is the manner in which the wife incarnates her imitation of Christ. Loving his wife just as Christ loved the Church is the manner in which the husband incarnates his imitation.

All of this must be heard in the context of the culture in which it was written. **The submission of the wife and the love of the husband was a crossover word that caused a cataclysmic shift that revolutionized the role of the women and restored the sanctity of marriage.**

- While many make submission the focus of this passage so try to subordinate the woman, the real focus of the passage is Christ’s love and how it empowers the husband.

- In the Greco-Roman culture to which Paul was writing, the wife had definite obligations to her husband but the husband had few to little obligations to his wife. So once again we see the revolution Christianity produced in the identity and role of the woman.
- The revolution hits its pinnacle in v.25 where Paul says “husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her.”

In doing pre-marriage classes (especially with non believers) it is always v.22 the wife stumbles over...that is until we get to v.25 **No wife will have trouble being subject to her husband if her husband will love her just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her.**

- On Commentator said it this way: **“One word sums up the responsibility of the wife and that is, submit. Likewise one word sums up the responsibility of the husband and that is, love. Where there is a loving husband you will find a submissive wife.”**

Where many would read this passage in the fear of control Paul writes it in the responsibility of love. “Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the Church...” There is that “just as” clause that continually defines the expectation of our imitation. **A “just as” love is a...**

1. **Sacrificial Love:** A “just as” love gives in spite of not because of. A “just as” love is a love that loves to give even if it doesn’t get. Though there may be many definitions of love, a “just as” love is a love that gives and keeps giving even to the point of sacrifice.
2. **Purifying Love:** A “just as” love is a love that washes not condemns. It is a love that covers rather than exposes. A “just as” love is a love that lifts up rather than drags down. It is a love that uses words to wash through encouragement not soil through criticism.
3. **Caring Love:** A “just as” love is a love that looks to serve not be served. A “just as” love takes us past the sterility of function into the mutuality of care. She is not just the mother of your children she is bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh.
4. **Covenantal Love:** A “just as” love is an unbreakable love. It is a love that makes the two one, incapable of separating one without destroying both. The husband and wife are one through covenant...the terms of God empowered by the means of God.

A “just as” love will always produce a “just as” submission. When a husband loves his wife just as Christ loved the Church a wife will submit to her husband just as Christ submits to Father.

- What love is to the wife respect is to the husband. Paul says in v.33 where the responsibility of the husband is to love the responsibility of the wife is to respect. A respect demonstrated through a heart of submission.

All of which is pointing to eternal purpose. The relationship of husband and wife is not the end; it is a picture of Christ's relationship to the Church. A Church that He sanctified and washed that He might present her to Himself a glorious, spotless Church with wrinkle or blemish...

- **In v.27 Paul gives us a glimpse into the divinely determined future of the Church. It has been sovereignly settled, the Church will be glorious, spotless, without wrinkle or blemish.**
- How????? Haven't got a clue...maybe a clue. When????? Already is in the mind of God. To Him who stands outside of time seeing the end from the beginning, calling into being those things which do not exist...the Church already is what He is coming back for.

For the Church to be what God sees the Church to be we must start seeing the Church in the manner in which God sees it...in spite of our present condition. God asked Abraham to see himself as the father of many nations even though he was childless and his wife still barren.

- **Glorious: Held in honor and in high repute. The world will not hold the Church in high honor until the Church starts holding itself in high honor.**
- A Church that holds itself in high honor will be a Church that acts in high repute. Our low view of the Church has produced a Church at ease rather than a Church in action,

For the Church to become who Christ sees the Church to be we must follow the pattern of Jesus and embrace to headship of Jesus.

The Pattern of Jesus:

- **Oneness with Father:** Jesus was not centered in Himself. His was a life centered in and in pursuit of the will of His Father. 3x's while sweating drops of blood He asked, "Can this cup pass from me. Nevertheless not my will but your will be done..."
- **Faithfulness in Prayer:** Prayer was not something Jesus did, Jesus was prayer.
- **Purity of Life:** Righteousness was not religious; grace was the means not to; rather than permission to do.
- **Proclamation of Truth:** Everywhere Jesus went He told the story...He was the Word
- **Spirit of Sacrifice:** Christ's life was a life laid down. His admonishment to us was to take up our cross and do the same.

The Headship of Jesus:

- **For the Church to become a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle, those who confess Christ's Lordship must also embrace His Headship.**
- His Lordship has to do with our submission and obedience as individual believers. His Headship has to do with our submission and obedience as a Body of believers. Lordship is individual; Headship is corporate.
- **There are those who recognize Him as Lord individually but refuse Him as Head corporately. They are willing to embrace individual expectation but refuse corporate expectation.** In doing so it is not the pastor we refuse, it is the Head.
- Consequently the Body never emerges to a place of honor. Though the individual may grow the Body is never allowed to reach a place of high repute.

Only as the Church embraces both the pattern of Jesus and the Headship of Jesus will we be able to grow into a Church that is held in honor and spoken of in high repute.

“Be imitators of God.” Wives, imitate Him in your submission; Husbands, imitate Him in your love. Everybody, imitate Him in the pattern you follow...especially in His corporate Headship of the Body.