

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE -

A CLEAR ILLUSTRATION OF WHAT THE CHURCH IS

Ephesians 5, verses 22-33

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it would be holy and without blemish.

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

The truth set forth here is unmistakable, crystal clear, easily understood by those who are willing to accept the Word of GOD and compare spiritual things with spiritual. If you have no preconceived ideas, if you are not following man-made dogma and doctrine, you can clearly see tremendous truths laid down in our present verses.

Here the HOLY SPIRIT uses the husband and the wife to show the spiritual picture of the New Testament church. He clearly states that wives are to be subject to their own husbands. They are to submit to their own husbands as unto the Lord. (Of course, this is in the true spiritual sense. A born again woman is not to submit to sin in order to please her husband - she is supposed to please the Lord. It is perfectly legitimate and right for a woman to go as far as she possibly can to please an unsaved husband - but she is not supposed to deny the Lord.) If the husband is saved, the husband is the head of that wife.

Paul illustrates by saying, **"For the husband is the head of the wife, EVEN AS CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH."** This is clear and unmistakable. CHRIST is the head of the church . . . not the Apostle Peter nor the Pope of Rome. The Pope of Rome is the head of the

Roman Catholic church, to be sure; but JESUS Christ is the head of the church of GOD.

The Bible clearly and unmistakably states that CHRIST is the head of the church; therefore, no man or woman is, has ever been, nor ever will be, head of the church. JESUS is the head; He is also the foundation (I Corinthians 3:11). But Paul goes further:

The husband is to protect the wife because she is the weaker vessel. The woman was made from a rib, removed from beneath Adam's arm. The woman should be under the protection of the husband, who is the stronger and who is the head. JESUS in like manner is the head of the church, and He is the Saviour of the body. He protects the body, thank GOD.

As I have tried to point out, we are not saved and left to fight our battles alone. We have within us the HOLY SPIRIT . . . a greater power than the spirit of Satan (I John 4:4, Romans 8:35-39). JESUS is not only the head of the church, but He also protects the church; and one day it will be presented to Him by GOD the Father, without spot or wrinkle . . . there will not be one iota of sin in the church when it is presented to the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

In verse 24, Paul goes a step further: JESUS is the head of the church, He is the Saviour of the church - therefore, the church is subject to JESUS. No two-legged human being on the face of this earth has any right to change anything in the Word of GOD pertaining to the church of GOD. JESUS said to Nicodemus, "**ye must be born again ...of the Spirit**" - and it is still, "**Ye must be born... of the Spirit.**" We must be saved by grace through faith. The entrance into the church is by salvation (Acts 2:47) and if you are not saved you are not a member of the New Testament church. JESUS is the Saviour; the church is subject to Him.

Paul goes a step further in the natural realm, and admonishes wives to be subject to their own husbands in everything. Paul is thinking in terms of believers - not sinners. The wife is to be subject to a Godly husband because the husband is head of the wife. The church is to be subject to JESUS - not to a preacher, a board of deacons or trustees, not a bishop.

No man has any right to dictate to the Lord's church, nor make changes in it. It is finished. "**Forever... thy Word is settled in Heaven.**" Not one jot or tittle will ever pass away. The church is subject to the doctrine of JESUS CHRIST, not to the dogmas and traditions of men. Regardless of what changes are made in doctrines and in the rules and regulations of the church, you can mark it well that the rules, regulations, doctrines of truth having to do with the church, are today as they were when JESUS said, "**Upon this rock I will build my church!**" The warning is the same: "**If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed**" (II John).

In verse 25, Paul goes further: The husband is head of the wife - but he is not the boss. He is to love his wife as JESUS loved the church and gave Himself for it. That gives a little different light on the relationship between a Christian man and Christian woman. A believing husband is not to dominate, dictate, and domineer the woman. He is to love that woman, lead and protect her; and if she is the kind of woman she ought to be, she wants to be loved, led and protected by the husband. A woman who has the right spirit does not desire to boss a man.

Verse 26 is very enlightening: "**That He (JESUS) might sanctify and cleanse it (the church)**" . .

. but how? "**By the washing . . .**" What washing? The baptistry? Baptism? The river Jordan? The One to whom we are subject gives the answer: "**.. .BY THE WASHING OF THE WATER BY THE WORD.**" There is not enough water in the river Jordan and in all the baptistries in all the world to wash away the least sin you have ever committed. Water baptism has nothing to do with redemption.

Water baptism has nothing to do with salvation. Water baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament church, which testifies that the person being baptized has died to the world, died to sin, is buried with CHRIST, and is raised to walk in newness of life. Water baptism does not wash away sins. The water referred to in John 3:5 and the water that cleanses the church is the Word of GOD. For instance "**NOW YE ARE CLEAN THROUGH THE WORD WHICH I HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU**" (John 15:3).

JESUS sat by Jacob's well. A woman came . . . a woman who had been married five times, and who had a husband to whom she was not married. JESUS said, "**Give me to drink.**" She said, "I do not understand it. The Jews hate the Samaritans, and yet, you (a Jew), ask me (a Samaritan), for a drink." JESUS said, "If you knew the gift of God, you would be asking me for a drink." The woman said, "I want this water. . . ." During the conversation the woman said, "**I know that Messiah cometh... when He is come, He will tell us all things.**" JESUS gave her the water.

Do you know what He gave her? He said, "**I that speak unto thee am He!**" And when she heard those words she threw down her waterpots and ran to town with an artesian well bubbling over in her soul. The words that JESUS gave her, from the first word to the last one He spoke, brought living water. The Word IS the water . . . living water; and the Word brings salvation.

The Word cleanses from all sin. The Word sanctifies: "**Sanctify them through thy truth: Thy Word is truth**" (John 17:17). The Word cleanses (John 15:3). The Word is the seed that brings the new birth (I Peter 1:23). Baptism is not the water referred to here - nor any other place having to do with cleansing from the filthiness of sin.

In verse 27, the church will be presented to CHRIST . . . a glorious church, a spotless church, a holy church, a church without wrinkle or blemish; blazing white holiness, purity, righteousness, godliness will be on display when the church is presented to JESUS at the marriage supper in the sky. What a picture! What a tremendous truth. What a glorious fact. I am so glad I am a member of that body! And dear reader, if you are not a member of that body, you can be right now, this moment, if you will bow your head, close your eyes, and put your trust in JESUS. He will save you.

In verse 28, Paul goes further with his illustration. Men ought to love their wives as their own body. A man should protect his wife just like he would protect himself. He should love his wife like he loves himself. A man and wife are one. People who are married in the Lord are not two people - they are one flesh. They love alike, they live alike, they think alike. They rejoice together, weep together. That is the way Christian marriage ought to be - and if GOD joined more people together the divorce courts would be out of business! No man hates his own flesh. We feed our flesh, we cherish our flesh . . . and we look after ourselves. We should do the same for our wife.

In the last part of verse 29 we read, " . . . **EVEN AS THE Lord THE CHURCH.**" The Lord JESUS is looking after His church, praise GOD! He looks after His little children. I am glad the Lord is my Shepherd. He leadeth me beside the still waters, He restoreth my soul, He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, He prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies, He anointeth my head with oil . . . He makes my cup to run over, and He will give me goodness and mercy all the days of my life and then He will give me a place in the Father's house forever. Hallelujah! What a Saviour! What a Shepherd!

Why does JESUS do all this for us? Verse 30 answers: We born again children of GOD are members of His body. Think of it! We are united to His body. In the spiritual aspect we are NOW members of His body. We are NOW members of His flesh and of His bones. Those of us who are born again believers did not join the New Testament church by filling out a card. We became part of the Body of CHRIST by faith in His Blood. The HOLY SPIRIT united us, welded us, put us into the body. No wonder He looks after us! You, father or mother, look after your little children if you are the kind of mom and dad you ought to be. JESUS is the kind of Saviour He ought to be, and He looks after His own. Praise His name!

Love:

No word in any language so fully embodies the Gospel of the Grace of GOD, no word so adequately represents CHRIST and what He did to bring about our salvation, as does love. What a standard GOD has set up concerning the love between a man and his wife: "**As Christ... loved the church!**" Certainly the love of CHRIST for the church is past finding out, it knows no boundaries, it knows no barriers. CHRIST's love is unspeakable, indescribable, unknowable in its fulness. In the eternity behind us He loved us, He gave Himself for us, even while we were yet dead in trespasses and sins . . . while we were yet ungodly. At this present hour He loves us and is sanctifying and cleansing believers (members of the church) with the washing of the water by the Word. But that is not all: Out yonder in the future, because of His great love wherewith He loved us, He will present the church to Himself, "**a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.**" What love!

The reason so clearly set forth here, that men should love their wives as they love their own bodies, is simply because a man's wife IS his own body. "**He that loveth his wife loveth himself.**"

The story is clearly set forth in Genesis 2:21-23: "**And the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now BONE OF MY BONES, AND FLESH OF MY FLESH: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.**"

We have here the divine basis for marriage. From this divine basis for marriage comes the mutual obligation between husband and wife. The wife is the body of the husband - a position of submission; but the wife is also "**his own flesh.**" Let the husband love the wife with the same love wherewith he loves himself, because she is his own flesh. GOD created man out of dust - but woman was taken out of man. She is bone of man's bone, and flesh of man's flesh.

So it is with the church: Adam's sleep was a type of the death of JESUS CHRIST (the second Adam). The Lord JESUS' side was opened, too . . . after He was dead the soldier pierced His side (John 19:34) and there came out both Blood and water. GOD caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and from his side was taken the rib from which GOD formed woman; GOD put a deep sleep on the second Adam, His side was opened . . . and through the opening of that side another body is being formed . . . HIS body, the church; He is the head, we are members of His body, and the only way we can become a member of that body is to accept His pierced side . . . the shed Blood.

Therefore, New Testament marriage is an intimate **INDISSOLUBLE UNION**. When a man and woman are joined together in marriage by the Lord, they become one flesh . . . they are no longer two. **"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife"** (Genesis 2:24). In the same way, the SON of GOD has a Bride. He left the Father's house, came into the world, died on the Cross, His side was opened - and through His shed Blood we who believe become members of His body, His Bride, and one day we will be presented to Him without spot or wrinkle. **"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning CHRIST and the church."**

Dear friend, would it be possible for the Lord JESUS to cast off the church? Would it be possible for JESUS to divorce the church and set it aside? I ask you then in the same sensible line of reasoning, if man and woman become one flesh when they are united by Almighty GOD in holy marriage and divinely instituted matrimony, can a man actually sever relationship with his wife? Or can the wife sever relationship with her husband? The marriage bonds cannot be broken if they are in the Lord. They are of kindred nature, and man and woman become one flesh.

Love and reverence cause men and women to become one in marriage. True marriage is a sanctified experience - the husband is dedicated to the wife, the wife is dedicated to the husband, the relationship is sacred and sweet; and when GOD joins two together they can never be put asunder by men or demons because they are no longer two - they are one.

GOD frowns on many marriages in this day and hour - quick marriages, marriages that are no more than a civil or legal ceremony to put two parties together, to live together in pleasure and sin for a season and then separate and go through the same mockery again. You must not forget, beloved, that marriages are made in Heaven. Marriages that are in the Lord are sacred and holy, and they have a tremendous spiritual setting . . . they are a type of the New Testament church. GOD provided the first bride, GOD performed the first marriage - and GOD instructed man that he is to leave and forsake everything else . . . but is never to forsake his wife.

Man is the head of the woman, and therefore he should be the leader in all things, especially in spiritual matters. GOD have mercy on lawyers and judges who break up homes in the divorce courts and make orphans out of little children who bear the image of parents they did not choose . . . bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. Such parents bring children into the world - and then separate, leaving the children with the stigma of being the child of a divorcee. To the young and to the unwed, let me advise that you not marry until you know beyond the shadow of a doubt that GOD is in the union. You may think it is terrible if you are in your early or late twenties and not married; but do not forget, it is much, much better to be a single girl than to be a heartbroken wife, married to the wrong man! It is much better to remain single than to marry and then have

that marriage end in a divorce court. But thank GOD, in the spiritual sense, when we believe on the Lord JESUS CHRIST, GOD does join us to the body of the Lord JESUS, we become one flesh - and praise GOD, all hell and earth cannot separate us from the Body of CHRIST.

Chapter five closes with the clear, understandable statement, "**NEVERTHELESS let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.**" Certainly when the husband loves the wife as he loves himself, and when the wife has reverence for such a loving husband, all hell could not separate them nor tear them apart. That is exactly as the Lord JESUS would have it.

~ end of chapter 23 ~

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