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A Covenant of Mutual Love Eph 5:21-33

Lesson Review and Analysis

5:21. Spirit-controlled believers are to **submit to one another**, willingly serving others and being under them rather than dominating them and exalting themselves. But basic to Christians' attitudes toward others is their **reverence for Christ**. Paul next elaborated on this subject of submission (Eph. 5:22-6:9).

Having admonished believers to be wise by being controlled by the Holy Spirit, Paul now applied this to specific life-relationships. It is relatively easy to exhibit a Spirit-filled life for one or two hours a week in church but it takes the work of the Holy Spirit to exhibit godliness not only on Sundays but also in everyday relationships between wives and husbands, children and parents, and slaves and masters. In each of these three relationships the first partner is commanded to be submissive or obedient (5:22; 6:1, 5). But the second partner is also to show submissiveness by his care and concern for the first partner. Both partners are to act toward one another as a service rendered to the Lord.

5:22-24. Wives are to submit to their husbands. (The verb "submit," absent in Gr. in v. 22, is borrowed from v. 21.) **As to the Lord** does not mean that a wife is to submit to her husband in the same way she submits to the Lord, but rather that her submission to her husband is her service rendered "to the Lord" (cf. Col. 3:18). The reason for this submission is that **the husband is the head of the wife** (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3), and this is compared to Christ's headship over the church (Eph. 5:23; cf. 4:15; Col. 1:18). **As Christ is the Savior of the church, His body, so a husband should be the protector of his wife, who is "one flesh" with him** (Gen. 2:24). **As the church is in submission to Christ, so also a wife should be to her husband.** It would be foolish to think of the church being head over Christ. But submission does not mean inferiority. It means that she recognizes that her husband is the head of the home and responds to him accordingly without usurping his authority to herself.

5:25. After speaking of a wife's submission to her husband (vv. 22-24), Paul then stated the measure of the husband's love for his wife (vv. 25-32). **Husbands are commanded, Love your wives** (cf. v. 33) **just as Christ loved the church. The word "love" (agapao) means seeking the highest good for another person** (cf. 2:4). This is an unselfish love as seen in Christ's sacrificial death in which He **gave Himself up for the church** (cf. 5:2; John 10:11, 15, 17-18; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 5:25; Heb. 9:14). A wife's submission in no way hints that a husband may lord it over his spouse, as a despot commanding a slave. The "submit-love" relationship is a beautiful mixture of harmonious partnership in marriage.

5:26-27. The purpose of Christ's death was to make the church holy (hagiasē, "to set apart" for Himself as His own forever; cf. Heb. 2:11; 10:10, 14; 13:12) which He did by cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word. This is not baptismal regeneration for that would be contrary to Paul's teaching in this book as well as all his other writings and the entire New Testament. Metaphorically, being regenerated is pictured as being cleansed by water (cf. "the washing of rebirth" in Titus 3:5). The "Word" (*rhēmati*) refers to the "preached Word" that unbelievers hear (cf. *rhēma* in Eph. 6:17; Rom. 10:8, 17; 1 Peter 1:25). The ultimate purpose of Christ's death is **to present... to Himself the church as radiant or "in splendor"** (RSV). This adjective, "glorious," in NEB, is not attributive (as in NIV's "a radiant church"). It is in the predicate position because there is an article before church (to "present the church... glorious," NEB). This purpose is then described negatively (**without stain or wrinkle**—no taint of sin or spiritual decay—**or any other blemish**) and positively (**holy and blameless**). These last two adjectives (*hagia*, "set apart," and *amōmos*, "without blemish," like a spotless lamb) are stated in Ephesians 1:4 as the purpose of God's election: that Christ may present His church to Himself in all its perfection (cf. "make holy" in 5:26; also cf. *hagious* and *amōmous* in Col. 1:22). Whereas human brides prepare themselves for their husbands, Christ prepares His own bride for Himself.

5:28-30. In verses 28-32 Paul applied the truths given in verses 25-27. As the church is the extension of Christ, so is the wife an "extension" of her husband. No one hates **his own body** but takes care of it. **Feeds** (*ektrephei*; cf. "bring them up" in 6:4) **and cares for** (*thalpei*; cf. 1 Thes. 2:7) is literally, "nourishes and cherishes." Thus as Christ loves the church, **His body** (of which all believers are **members**; cf. Eph. 4:25), so should **husbands... love their wives as their own bodies** (5:28; cf. v. 33). Men care for their bodies even though they are imperfect and so they should care for their wives though they are imperfect.

5:31-32. Verse 31 is a free rendering of Genesis 2:24, indicating that the bond between husband and **wife** is greater than that between parent and child. The greatness of the **mystery** refers to **the two becoming one flesh**. But then Paul returned to mention the wonderful bond between **Christ and the church**, which illustrates the love of a husband for his wife.

5:33. This is a restatement of the responsibilities of the husband and wife toward each other: love by the husband (cf. v. 25) **and respect by the wife.**

(Adapted from the Bible Knowledge Commentary)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

Love is more than a feeling, it's a commitment

POEM FOR THE WEEK:

"For better or for worse," we pledge, "Through sickness and through strife"; And by the help and grace of God We'll keep these vows for life.
—D. De Haan

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:

Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun
(Ecc 9:9 NKJV)

(from "Our Daily Bread", July 12, 2008)

New Series: Responding to God's Grace

UNIT: God is Faithful

NEXT WEEK

Faithful During Distress
(Gen 19:1, 4-5, 15-26, 29)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Love Relationship of the Wife (Eph 5:21-24)

Submissive relationship (21-22)

- Submit because it is fitting in the Lord (Col 3:18)
- Submit so that others may be won over to God (1 Peter 3:1)
- Submit so that no one will malign the Word of God (Titus 2:5)
- Submit in harmony (1 Peter 3:8)
- Submit to be used by God (2 Tim 2:20-21)
- Submit to God's will (James 4:13-15)

Hierarchy of relationship (23-24)

- Hierarchy of headship (1 Cor 11:3)
- Hierarchy of rule (Gen 3:16)
- Hierarchy of origination (1 Cor 11:8)
- Hierarchy of authority (Rom 13:1)

Love Relationship of the Husband (Eph 5:25-31)

Love relationship (25-28)

- Love that does not allow harshness (Col 3:19)
- Love that comes through understanding (1 Peter 3:7)
- Love of whole family (Titus 2:4)
- Love that God allows one to leave parents (Gen 2:24)
- Love that is captivating (Prov 5:18-19)

Unifying relationship (29-31)

- Unifying because God puts them together (Matt 19:6)
- Unifying to combat sin (1 Cor 7:2)
- Unifying because of being considered one flesh (Gen 2:24)
- Unifying because we all belong to one another in Christ (Rom 12:5)
- Unifying because we are unified with Jesus in spirit (1 Cor 6:17)

Comparative Relationship of Marriage and the Church (Eph 5:32-33)

Christian relationship (32)

- Christian relationship through faith (Gal 3:26-28)
- Christian relationship through sanctification (1 Cor 7:14)
- Christian relationship because of being one of God's chosen (Col 3:12-14)
- Christian relationship that is based on not being independent (1 Cor 11:11)

Respect relationships (33)

- Respect to those it is due (Rom 13:7)
- Respect out of brotherly love (1 Peter 2:17)
- Respect those who are weaker (1 Peter 3:7)
- Respect as part of trying to please others (1 Cor 7:33-34)
- Respect because a prudent wife is from God (Prov 19:14)