

EPHESIANS

Message 89

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Reading: Ephesians 5:25-27

INTRO: We have been working on Paul's instructions to walk circumspectly. We looked at it as he covered the circumspect walk in general and now we are looking at the specifics. Paul transitioned from the generals to the specifics in the last of four participles which we find in 5:21. Paul's instructions were that they were to submit one another in the fear of God. He now will deal with several areas of submission. The first is wives to husbands. The second is children to parents. And the last is workers to bosses.

The matter of wife and husband relationship is covered in 5:22-33. In the last message we looked at the instructions to the wife to submit to the husband. This is in verses 22-24. The one major instruction given is for the wife to submit to the husband. She is to submit to him as to the Lord and she is to submit to him in everything.

I took the view that she is to submit to her husband as to the Lord in everything means her submission to her husband is in everything the Lord desires for her to submit to him. The Lord would never wish her to submit to him in sinful things. As I began working on this message I realized I had failed to do my exegetical work properly in the previous message. It is my normal procedure to diagram the passage grammatically and interpret from that. Because the passage was quite simple, I failed to do that. Well, for this message I went back and did that to verses 22-24 as well, and had I done that earlier it would have helped me.

So let me briefly mention something from verse 22. It says, "Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord." I failed to see this word "as" as an adverbial conjunction. When you do, here is what the implied words indicate in the verse. It would then say, "Wives, submit to your own husbands as *you would* to the Lord." That brings out the precise meaning that I mentioned that Jones suggested.

Now, the reason for her submission to her husband is because that is what God has designed her for. If she does not follow God in this, it will defeat God's purpose for structuring the family the way He did. God made her for her husband and to be

the glory of her husband. God did not make her husband for her. I put it like this: It makes a big difference if my car is made for me or I am made for the car. The wife was made for the husband.

And now, having dealt with this most important issue in marriage for the wife, Paul will deal with the husband. This takes us from verses 25-33. As Paul instructed wives and then gave the reasons, so he will do with regard to the husband now.

2. The specifics (5:22)

a. Family related (5:22-6:4)

1) Husband/Wife (5:22-33)

So we begin with verse 25:
argument

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

Paul had one major instruction for the wife: Submit to your husband. And in all the following verses, he will give one instruction to the husband: love your wife. All the rest is given to clarify what that means. For the husband to love his wife is both how simple and how complicated marriage is for the man. I suppose all marriage problems come back to a failure on either or both partners failing in this one point that falls to each of them. And that failure will also lie in just one issue: sin.

We begin then with this all important word, *love*. I think this word is one of the most misunderstood words in the NT. There are four Greek words sometimes translated as love. Three are used in the NT. The word we associate love with the most, *erao*, love or romantic love is never used in the NT. But we can hardly speak of love without getting that idea involved in our understanding of love. I think that idea of love is one of

the most powerful in all languages. It is also a very important part of life when followed biblically. This idea of love is also one of the most abused areas of life all across the globe.

But the romantic idea of love is not the most important in the NT. As a matter of fact, if use is an indicator, it is the least important. The most important idea of love is the love expressed in agapee love.

We have the idea that love is doing nice things to everybody. And the idea of nice has to do with our concept of nice. Today, tolerance is considered being nice. Over a time period of about 700 years the word nice changed from meaning foolish, ignorant, senseless to careless, clumsy, weak, poor, needy, to simple, stupid, silly foolish, to ignorant, unaware, not knowing; to the meaning we attach to it today. For us it means to be agreeable, enjoyable, pleasant, delightful, or pleasurable. But being nice to everyone is not necessarily love.

Today, saying, "Black lives matter" is nice. To say "All lives matter" can be dangerous. But 1 Corinthians 13:6 says, "Love (agapee love) rejoices in the truth." Do black lives matter? Of course! Do white lives matter? Of course! Do all lives matter? Of course, including the unborn! I read a Fox News article the other day with words something like this underneath: "Today truth is relative, if it is there at all." When we talk about love according to the biblical idea of it, we must have the biblical idea of what that word means in our mind. The word "love" of our text is agapee love. I have read somewhere that agapee love was the lowest word for love to the Greeks.

I see as the main ingredient of the four kinds of words used for love in the Greek

language as an attraction or attachment to someone or to something. Our idea of love is basically based on feelings. It is an emotional thing. But in my understanding, agapee love is not based on feelings or emotions at all. It is based on truth. It is an attachment or attraction to someone based on truth.

Let me illustrate this once more. You are in a rush to get to an appointment. And then you see someone who has driven off the road and this person might die if they do not get help soon. You do not need to know the person to love them. You forget your appointment and do what is the right thing to do and the cost to you is unimportant. At this time, this person's need rises above everything else.

Somewhere in this series I gave you the illustration of the lawyer who tested Jesus on what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked him what was written in the law. And he said it was to love God and to love one's neighbor. And Jesus said, "That's right. Just go do that and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself. It was that neighbor thing that bothered him. And so he asked Jesus who his neighbor was. And Jesus gave the illustration of the good Samaritan. There was a seriously wounded man on the road, and a priest and a Levite had both passed by him and left him. But a Samaritan (the Samaritans were outcasts to the Jews) came along and he helped the man.

Now consider this: The Samaritan did not know this wounded man at all. But according to Jesus, he loved him. How so? Well, he did what agapee love does. He did not need to know who this man was to love him. He did not have to like this guy to love him. He did not need to feel like helping him love him. To love him he needed to do the thing that was right to do. Agapee love is based on truth, and the truth was the

wounded man was a human being with a legitimate need. And the priest, and the Levite, and the Samaritan all had their chance to love this man, but only the Samaritan did so.

You see, you cannot command anyone to like anyone else. Nor can anyone else command you to like someone else. God cannot command us to like everyone and then justly punish us for not doing so. This liking business is based on ever changing emotions or personal tastes. But you can command someone to love another because it is based on truth. And God can punish us for not doing so, because we can do it.

So in our passage the husband is commanded to love his wife, and God will deal with him if he does not. There was a man in our community who has a wife and eight children. He left his wife and children for another woman who also had several children. In court he disowned his wife and his children. Did he fail to love his wife and children? Of course he did. Is he failing to love them right now? Is he sinning now by failing to do that which is right? Of course he is. He has committed huge sins and lives with those sins every day and he will stand before the righteous judge some day and then he will be cast into hell for all eternity. There is only one hope for this man. It is to repent and go back to his wife and love her. He could yet be redeemed. If not, he will go to hell. Does that sound very harsh to you?

Husbands, love your wives. Here is a command that will have consequences according to the size of violation, if husbands fail. And to what extent should a husband love his wife? Well, according to our verse, it is just as Christ loved the Church. And how much did He love the Church? Well, He gave His life for her. His love for the Church cost Him His life.

Some time ago there was a shooting in Las Vegas where 59 people were killed, one man died to save his wife. Sonny Melton saved his wife Heather Melton, but he died. He was 29 years old. And here is the point. Hardly any man will ever have to go to that extent of love for his wife. But every man can give of himself for his wife in everyday life.

When I spoke in the Philippines to husbands and wives I did not know what illustrations would be applicable there. So I talked about a husband coming home from work tired. He wanted to stretch out on the couch. His wife was busy with supper and she was frazzled from a day with rambunctious children. And when he came in she asked if he would carry out the garbage, and he had no interest in doing so. But a look at his wife, and sizing up the situation, he said, "My dear, I would be glad to do that." I do not know what customs they have in the Philippines, but what I saw was that they all understood the illustration. And how small is that cost compared to giving one's life for one's wife?

Is it not amazing that the Bible does not instruct the wife to love her husband? Oh it does, in one other passage, and I have told you about it. Paul tells Titus to instruct the older women to teach the younger. And one of the things they are to teach them is to be husband-lovers. But it is not agapee love.

So our text says:

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

You see, true love is willing to pay the price. Now I want to make a proposition.

Here is what I propose: If a husband loves his wife with agapee love no matter how he feels or what his emotions are, the other loves including the appropriate feelings will be there again and again. And the failure of the husband to give of himself for the legitimate needs of his wife, will cost him in the other areas as well. Every man who does not love his wife with this love will give account to God to the extent that he failed.

Well, Christ gave Himself for the Church. The Church is the bride of Christ. And He gave Himself for her and verse 26 gives us the immediate reason for that. It is:

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

Here we have the immediate benefit of Christ giving Himself for the Church. It is that He might sanctify and cleanse the Church. It is the Church that receives the benefit. And how the Lord do that? He does it by the washing of water by the Word. I would capitalize the word "Word" here. It is a reference to the Word of God.

I want to take up first the idea of washing of water by the Word because some attach to it the idea of baptism. I do not think that baptism is in view at all here. The new birth, sanctification, and cleansing all take place by the Word of God. But what is in view here in particular, I believe, is not the new birth or initial sanctification or initial cleansing. What is in view is the ongoing process of sanctification and cleansing. The reason I think that is because in the next verse we see that this sanctification and cleansing is to bring about the end product. The end product is when He presents the Church to Himself a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle.

Furthermore, it is not only the cleansing

to which the washing of water by the Word is attached. It covers both the sanctification and the cleansing. Turn to John 17. The sanctification spoken of here is accomplished by the Word of God as well as the cleansing. Just before Jesus was crucified He prayed the prayer of John 17. And in that prayer He prayed this, beginning in verse 17:

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

18 *"As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.*

19 *"And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.*

Here Jesus prayed that God would sanctify believers by the truth. That is by the Word of God. So we want to now look at this process of sanctification. Jesus Christ, according to our verse, gave Himself for the Church that she might be sanctified. To be sanctified is the process of making holy. Man is sinful. Sin is man's major problem. In salvation, man is first justified. To be justified is to be declared righteous, and justification delivers one from the penalty of sin. But to save man from hell is not the primary reason why Christ died for sinners. His primary purpose was to sanctify them. That is to save them from sin. To be saved from sin is to be delivered from the power of sin so they might live righteously.

When God told Joseph what name he was to give to Mary's Son, He said, "You shall call His name Jesus." That means Jehovah saves. And why was He to have this name? Because, He said further, "He will save His people from their sins. He died, not just to save man from the penalty of sin, which is hell; but to save him from the power of

sin. And someone who is delivered from the power of sin has overcome sin. But we do not overcome all sins by overcoming one. We overcome sin one at a time.

Let me illustrate that. Turn to Deuteronomy 7. God had taken Israel out of Egypt. That is a picture of justification. They had traveled three days and on the third night they had crossed over the Red Sea. That pictures death burial and resurrection. Now they are in the wilderness, and they are to enter Canaan. I believe Canaan is not a picture of heaven, but it is a picture of the Christian who has become victorious in overcoming by faith.

Now the land of Canaan, though it is a picture of Christian victory, is not a place of bliss with no battles. It is a place of overcoming the enemy by faith. There were enemies that were giants in this land. Every one of us meets something in our Christian life that is a giant to us. You see, there are those who say they are born, what we call gay. That is a nice name for a very sinful life-style. But they say they were born that way, therefore, who can be blamed for how they were born? So it must be OK because they came by it, by birth.

I do not doubt that some are born that way. Everyone is born selfish, but does that make selfishness OK. Some are born thieves. Some or most are born liars. That is why people steal or lie, and that what makes them lost. And the purpose of salvation is to deliver one from being selfish, or stealing, or lying or any other sin. So those who are born gay have a huge giant to kill. Those who are born narcissists have a huge giant to kill. And those who enter the Christian rest of Hebrews 4, still have huge battles before them. But they have learned to conquer by faith.

And in Deuteronomy 7:27-30 God tells them what will happen in Canaan:

27 *"I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.*

28 *"And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you.*

29 *"I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beast of the field become too numerous for you.*

30 *"Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.*

God deals with our sins little by little. If God required too much of us too soon, the land would become desolate. That does not work. So those who learn to live by faith will learn to do so little by little. And that which they conquer will be conquered.

Do you know what happened when Israel had entered the land? Turn to Judges chapter 1. Here we are told what happened in many cases. We begin in verse 21:

21 *But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.*

22 *And the house of Joseph also went up against Bethel, and the LORD was with them.*

23 *So the house of Joseph sent men to spy out Bethel. (The name of the city was formerly Luz.)*

24 And when the spies saw a man coming out of the city, they said to him, "Please show us the entrance to the city, and we will show you mercy."

25 So he showed them the entrance to the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword; but they let the man and all his family go.

26 And the man went to the land of the Hittites, built a city, and called its name Luz, which is its name to this day.

27 However, Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land.

28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out.

29 Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; so the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

30 Nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites dwelt among them, and were put under tribute.

31 Nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Acco or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob.

32 So the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out.

33 Nor did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh or the

inhabitants of Beth Anath; but they dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath were put under tribute to them.

That is a picture of multitudes of Christians. They have come a long way, but at some point they fail to progress further. So here is an important thing to understand about sanctification. As one progresses in life, one enters new phases of life that have new temptations and new sins to overcome. One may overcome anger, and then there is another thing and another, and then yet another as one grows spiritually. God wants us to learn to overcome in every area. The battle is never over as long as we live, but the battles always progress further, if one overcomes in the area in which one is. And Christ died to sanctify His bride.

A man who is a Christian and loves his wife will help her progress in her spiritual walk. A man who does not love his wife will greatly hinder her walk with the Lord. He is to be the leader in the home. He is the head. What he does is important beyond measure.

So Christ loved the church to sanctify it. Then Christ died to cleanse His bride, who will someday be His wife. We'll read verse 26 again. It says:

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

We looked at the word to sanctify. The second thing the Lord wants to do is to cleanse her. I want to begin with the last part of the verse, and that is that He might cleanse the Church with the washing of water by the Word. We must ask the question now: what is the difference between being sanctified; that is set apart

from sin; and being cleansed?

Listen to 1 John 1:5-9:

5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say we have fellowship with the Lord and we walk in sin, we are liars. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. You see, we all need to be further sanctified. When we recognize our sin, and we confess it, the Lord is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. But if we walk in the light, we have fellowship with the Lord, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. A continual walk is continual cleansing. And how does this cleansing differ from sanctification?

In sanctification we are set apart from sin. This comes from repentance and confession of sin. Now the sin is gone. But what is this cleansing? Let me read from D. Martyn Lloyd Jones here on his comment on the next verse which speaks of the glorious Church without spot or wrinkle. He says:

"These words define Christ's ultimate objective - that the church should not only be delivered from the guilt of sin, but that she should be delivered entirely and completely from sin in every shape and form. Surely Toplady states this idea to perfection when he puts it like this:

*Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.*

"The New Testament never stops at the guilt; it always goes on to this further idea of our being cleansed from the power of sin also. Indeed I want to add even to that. This cleansing is not only from the guilt of sin, and from the power of sin, it is also from the pollution of sin" end quote (VI 156).

I think by this pollution of sin he means the sin nature. He speaks of Paul in Romans 7 where he says, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing." He is saying, I think, that sin's pollution gives sin power in us.

So let me give you a picture of this. I was once a cigarette smoker. Oh how I battled to overcome this when I got saved. I would confess my sin again and again. And then one day I began to get the victory. And finally I stopped smoking altogether. I no longer needed to confess my sin of having smoked again. But the power was still there. I still desired to smoke, but I was no longer controlled by the desire. And then came the time when I was cleansed from the very pollution of smoking. It no longer had any pull on me. Nothing causes me to desire to smoke any more. Now I am cleansed from all guilt of smoking. I am free from its power, and I am free from its pollution.

God wants to expose every area of my sin

nature and cleanse me from it. I am sure if I live longer, new areas will be revealed to me.

During our Covid19 epedemic I gave a message on clean hands.

Psalm 24:3-4 says:

3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place?

4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully.

The Lord has a huge task in taking sinners out of the gutter and then making holy and clean people. When the thinking has been in the gutter for a long time and all kinds of sin have taken place, to cleanse such a person is a huge task. Clean hands, what a treasure to God. And just what is a clean heart? It is a clean mind. When one is sanctified in one's thinking, one's thinking becomes clean all over.

To many, grace is an overlooking of sin. We say, "It is understandable that we are like that, God knows we are but flesh. But we are saved by grace. We are not saved by works." So, now that we understand we are saved by grace, we understand that we will live in some of these things, but grace has us covered.

But true grace does not bypass or overlook or cover sin, it gives us the power to overcome. It is not those whose sins are overlooked that enter heaven. It is those who overcome sin. Clean hands and clean minds do not come from overlooking sin, they come from overcoming sin, which is both sanctification and cleansing.

Now our passage says that Christ gave Himself for the Church that He might

sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the Word. There may be an allusion here as to how a king took a wife in the OT. Ezekiel 16 gives a rather descriptive picture of how Israel was prepared to become the wife of God. In the book of Esther, it took the ladies who might become the queen a year to prepare to be presented to the king to see if she even qualified. Esther 2:12-13 says:

12 Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women.

13 Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace.

The Church has been in preparation 2,000 years now. And as each new person gets saved the preparation begins for that day when Christ will present the Church to Himself without spot or wrinkle.

So in verse 26 we have the immediate benefit of Christ's death for sinners. These benefits are reaped by the Church as she is sanctified and cleansed. But there is an ultimate benefit and this benefit is for the Lord. It is when she is set before Him. We find this in verse 27. Christ further gave His life:

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.

The final outcome of a life-time of sanctification and cleansing is that Christ

might present to Himself a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

So I ask, would one not think that God would present the Church to Christ? How is it that He presents the Church to Himself? I think we must go back to the way of Jewish weddings. You are familiar with how Jewish weddings took place. The young man and his dad went and made the deal with the bride's dad. That is the betrothal. Then the groom went back to his Father's house and prepared a place for His bride. When the time came that everything was ready, which usually took about a year, the young man went to the bride's place with his escorts.

She had to be ready at all times because she did not know when he would come. He might even come at midnight. She usually had about a year to prepare. The Lord has been betrothed to the Church. He has gone back to His Father's house to prepare a place for her. And I think that when He set presents her to Himself is when He comes back at the rapture for the Church.

We learn in 1 Thessalonians 4 that Christ comes for His bride at the bride's place of residence. He comes into the atmosphere. Then He takes her back to His Father's house where He has been preparing a place for her.

So, when Christ comes for His bride, he wants her to be, first a glorious woman! The word 'glorious' comes from the word glory. Glory is that which reveals anything attractive or positive or that which is truly pleasing or good. The Church's glory will be to be sanctified from sin and clean in heart or mind. She has been prepared to meet her bridegroom, the sinless Christ!

Second, He wants her to be without spot. I

think having no spot or wrinkle does not speak of her skin, but her wedding dress. What you have to picture here is a beautiful white wedding dress without spot or wrinkle. The Lord wants His church without spot. It should be our desire to have a life without spot. The Lord wants us to be without a spot that is distractive. Third, He wants her to be without wrinkle. You could not get a clearer picture of that than a bride and her wedding dress. If you have had the opportunity to observe brides, there is little that is more important than the dress. Those who make their own dress spend untold, painstaking hours into it. The bride of Christ is making her own dress. Revelation 19 tells us that the white dress of the bride is the righteous acts of the saints and saints are sanctified ones! Christ wants His bride without spot or wrinkle!

Then the Lord wants her to be holy. That is why He is in the long process of sanctifying her. When Christ comes for His bride, he wants her to be entirely separated from sin. And last, he wants her to be without blemish. To be without blemish here means to be without blame. To be without blame is to not be able to assign responsibility for a fault or wrong to someone. Christ wants His bride to be in such a condition that no fault or blame can be assigned to her. What a picture is presented of the Church here!

And just how does the Lord prepare such a bride? It is by the washing of water by the Word. The Word of God is a sanctifying, purifying, cleansing agent. Today we have all kinds of teaching on what is called psychology. It is amazing the seeming insights some have into people. One would think with all the energy poured into psychology or mental health both in the world and in the church, we would come up with some teaching that would turn sinners

into pure, clean people.

Now it is not that modern psychology may not be of some help to some. But I know of no psychology that sanctifies, or purifies, or cleanses the soul from sin. The Word *psychology* comes from the word *soul*. But what we find in Scripture is that pastors are those who care for souls, not clinical psychologists. And we find that Jesus Christ is the chief bishop or overseer of our souls. And Jesus Christ and pastors work through the Word of God by the Spirit of God.

CONCL: So, in conclusion, husbands, love your wives! And what does that mean? I believe this has nothing whatever to do with feelings or emotions. I understand agapee love to be based on truth. It means that the husband does what is right to do for his wife. This is a huge command. A husband can love his wife. It can be commanded. And a failure to love her will be met at the judgment.

A husband who truly loves his wife loves himself. It will return to him again and again. Now I do understand that women are free moral agents. Some fall into sin and it has horrible consequences in the home. So to our young people, when you consider someone as a potential partner, consider carefully that to marry is to enter a life-long commitment.

Then a godly husband is the greatest thing a woman can have with regard to her spiritual life. In likening the marriage relationship to the Church, verse 23 says that Christ is the Savior of the body. There is a question: does it follow that the husband is the savior of the wife? Well, the word savior may carry the idea of preserver. For example, 1 Timothy 4:10 says:

10 For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

We know that this does not mean universal salvation. What it means is God is the preserver of mankind. The husband is to be the preserver of the wife. He looks after wife and family. And just as Christ looks after the well-being of the Church, so the husband is to look after the well-being of his wife.

So we have the command for husbands to love their wives. That theme runs from verse 25-33.