

Indicatives & Imperatives in Marriage: the Husband, 1

Ephesians

By Brandon Bernard

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Westminster Presbyterian Church

3701 Jones Creek

Baton Rouge, LA 70816

Website: www.wpcbr.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/wpcbr

Let us return once again to our study through the book of Ephesians and we've come now to Ephesians 5:21-33 which concerns marriage and, once again, I want to encourage us all that if this series that we have come upon here in Ephesians 5 is one that is intended to be taken as a whole and each of these sermons really build upon one another, really giving us much insight into the institution of marriage and the roles and duties found within that institution. Tonight we will just continue reading the entirety of our passage which is found from verses 21, we'll begin with verse 22 going all the way down to the end of the chapter.

People of God, this is the word of our God.

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 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. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Thus ends the reading of God's word from Ephesians 5. Let us go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we are not interested in the latest trend of marital advice, Father, we are interested in a word from You, the One who has created marriage, the One who

has wired marriage. Father, we pray that You would teach us much this evening as we submit ourselves to Your word, acknowledging it as the very word of our God and nothing less. Lord, give us hearts of humility, give us hearts that are open to instruction and may You, by Your Spirit, illumine us to this text of Scripture and so change us and ultimately, Father, we ask that we would not leave here this evening without our eyes gazed upon our Husband, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is in His name we pray. Amen.

You may be seated.

The marriage relationship is a divinely-ordered relationship wherein God has designed it in a certain way. As Creator and Designer of the relationship, the Lord provides us insight into how we are to order our thinking so that it aligns with God's thinking in this important matter. There is much in our culture that militates against thinking God's thoughts after him when it comes to marriage so let us with humility approach the word of God to better understand God's thoughts on this matter.

Let us be mindful, as I've mentioned before, that Paul is not dealing with all of the exceptional cases of sin that introduce special circumstances but he's setting out for us foundational principles that serve as the stones at the foundation level of the edifice called marriage. We have already considered the idea of submission as being God's idea, as well as the important distinction between indicative and imperative when it comes to the marriage union. Indicative statements mean statements of fact, and imperative statements being statements of command or instruction. We've distinguished between role on the one hand, who one is in a marriage, from duty, what one is called to do in the marriage. Again, indicative on the one hand and imperative on the other.

Paul first addresses the wife, as we've seen, and these last couple of weeks we've considered the wife's indicative and imperative, her role and her duty. Tonight, we're going to turn to begin our consideration of the indicative or role of the husband and the imperative or duties of the husband in the marital relationship, and as you see, these majority of what Paul has to communicate to us on the subject of marriage deals predominantly with the husband and not with the wife, and there is, of course, a reason for that.

If you recall, Paul using the categories of indicative and imperative, he states that the wife was called to do something because the husband is something. In other words, the call of the wife to submit herself to her husband, according to the Apostle Paul, is rooted in the fact that she is not head but that he, the husband, is the head. The starting point for biblically understanding what it means to be a husband is to understand the role of headship. Again, an indicative and it's most important that we start our understanding of headship with the indicative nature of headship.

Notice that Paul writes in our text in Ephesians 5, he says, "For the husband is the head of the wife." This is not what the man is to strive to be, for this is what he already is. A husband is commanded to love his wife but nowhere in Scripture is he commanded to be a head to his wife. Again, it's an imperative. It's important to distinguish between

imperatives and indicatives and, yes, it is imperative that we distinguish the two. In other words, while a husband may be a good head or he may be a poor head, a husband cannot refuse to be head for that is what he is. One author put it very helpfully, he writes, "Arguing with the fact of the husband's headship in the home is like jumping off of a cliff in order to quarrel with the law of gravity. Marshal the arguments on the way down however one likes, he will eventually find himself refuted in a messy way." Paul stresses in no uncertain terms both here in Ephesians and elsewhere throughout his writings that the husband is the head of the wife.

Along with this comes another indicative that Paul provides us, another statement of fact. Paul not only writes the fact that the husband is head but he continues, notice in our text it says, "For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church." So just as we saw that Paul had identified the wife as a church mirror, here we find Paul identifying the husband as a Christ mirror. Just as the wife's role inescapably reflects or mirrors the church in its relationship to Christ, so also the husband's role inescapably reflects or mirrors Christ in his relationship to his church. Just as the wife will be a good or effective mirror or a poor and ineffective mirror of the church, so also the husband will either be a good and effective mirror of Christ or he will be a poor mirror of Christ.

You see, once again, each party is preaching a sermon and they're inescapably preaching a sermon. Just as the wife, her life with her husband preaches either a true or a false sermon concerning the church's role in relationship to Christ, so also the husband's life with his wife preaches either a true or a false sermon concerning Christ's role in his relationship with the church. You see, it's not whether we preach a sermon about Christ, husbands, it's not whether we preach a sermon about Christ in his relationship to his bride, it's just which one, which sermon do we preach? Is it poor? Or is it true or is it false? What sermon, I challenge all of us husbands, what sermon are we preaching? When we speak to our wife, is it the way Christ speaks to his wife? Does it communicate to her and the other children, if you have children in the home, a true message of how Christ speaks to his bride? Or is it speaking a false message about how Christ speaks to his bride? Think of all that can be said about how Christ deals with his bride. Brethren, we will either mirror that well or we will not mirror that well, but we will mirror Christ nonetheless. What sermon are we preaching to our wife as we hold this indicative, this role of Christ's mirror for it is an inescapable role that we possess.

So the husband is head. Now again, this does not speak to the husband having an ontological difference from the wife, meaning that he's on a higher scale of being than his bride. No, there is ontological equivalence as two human beings, rather there is an economic difference in the husband and the wife in terms of the way they function in this relationship that God calls marriage. He functions in his role, his indicative, this indicative role that he possesses, is not one that renders submission but rather he is one that receives submission. He, not she, holds the role of authority in the relationship. He, the husband, holds a position of rule, a position of leader in the relationship. To use Paul's language elsewhere, it is the husband who is the manager of the household.

This kind of language to this world, especially in modern society, does not sit well and it is understandable how it would not fit within an unbiblical worldview, but I fear that there are many Christians who even though they're committed to the word of God as being infallible and committed to the word of God as being the very word of God, still have difficulty with the idea of one party holding authority while the other does not hold authority in that union. I believe the reason for this, unfortunately, is that many Christian husbands preach the wrong sermon and they preach the wrong sermon about Christ because they do not understand one of many important elements of possessing this role. I think if husbands rightly understood their indicative, their hearts would melt and their disposition towards their wives would drastically change because there is a word that comes along with headship that many husbands fail to embrace and it is a word that is difficult for the hearts of sinful husbands to accept and that is this word: responsibility. To be a head is to own responsibility. Period. It is to own responsibility for the welfare of the marriage. Period. To be a head is to hold the ultimate responsibility for the state of the marriage.

Notice how Paul goes on to write, "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body." In fact, the word here is emphatic, perhaps to render this in English whenever we want to make something emphatic, "He, Himself, is its Savior." Paul is certainly not in any way paralleling the husband as the Savior of the wife, only Christ is the Savior, but rather he's further elucidating what is found in Christ's headship in relation to his bride. If she is going to be saved, which is her greatest welfare, it is to come about by he, himself. Only he, himself, can bring about this greatest welfare.

You see, this is fundamental to the role of Jesus as the second member of the Godhead who alone has been given the title Redeemer, and having been given this bride, a people for his own, he had the – and here's our word again – responsibility as head to render all that was necessary for her salvation. If Jesus was successful in his obedience, then this would yield the intended salvation for his bride, however, if he failed, this would not yield the intended salvation of his bride. He was the responsible party regardless of the outcome. It was an inescapable indicative. As head, Jesus was responsible.

Paul's teaching on the husband's role as head is not empty with meaning, leaving the interpretation of headship up to man to determine what that is. No, the position of authority, this position of authority is one of responsibility. Think with me, if you will, when God came into the garden of Eden. When he came into the garden of Eden, though it was Eve that had eaten the fruit first, the Lord did not come in and say, "Eve, Eve, where art thou?" He came into the garden and said, "Adam, where art thou?" And ever since Adam, husbands have continued to emulate Adam in his response to the Lord. Remember his response? He said, "Lord, it was this woman whom You gave to me. She, she, she, she." Do you see that? And this has been the tendency of husbands ever since, to evade the word "responsibility" in their position as head.

You see, it is possible for someone to be guilty of some wrong and yet another person be ultimately responsible. I think those that are in the military, and I'm not military, I know

some of you are and may be, I think those in the military perhaps are in a better position to more easily understand this concept. Someone within a battalion, let's say, may mess up and do something wrong that leads to consequences for himself and lead to consequences for the rest of the battalion, but when the General shows up, who is held ultimately responsible? To whom do all eyes turn? To the Colonel. The Colonel. Now is that soldier guilty? Absolutely that soldier is guilty. Is that soldier responsible perhaps with a small letter "r" at some level? Absolutely he holds responsibility for his fault and for his wrong, but the Colonel is and bear with me in employing this language, is head of the unit and is the "R" responsible party.

We find this element of responsibility fleshed out as it pours over into the duties found in verses 25 and following and we will be considering those duties as we move forward in Ephesians, but suffice it to say for now that it is important that we grasp part and parcel with headship is responsibility.

So the plea tonight, brothers and sisters, the plea tonight for us is to take care not to make the mistake that so many persons make when it comes to talking about marriage. We must not make the mistake of beginning with duties, beginning with imperatives in the marriage relationship. We must begin where Paul begins, he begins with indicative. Do you notice it's not until you get to 25 that he says anything about his duty to love his wife. He hadn't gotten there yet. He's still trying to establish the indicative that the man, the husband, is the head.

So let us start where Paul starts, with the role or indicative. The indicatives, first and foremost for husbands, is that they are head and they are Christ mirrors inescapably. Therein lies that which is fundamental, the foundation upon which all the duties will be built. May we take in the privilege and the weight of this role as ours and I encourage us husbands to consider, yes, it's privilege but it's weight because it is weighty. When we husbands come to understand and cherish the role of headship and all that comes with it in terms of responsibility, who do we end up looking like so well? We look like him who took responsibility for sin that was not his, who owned responsibility for the welfare of his dear bride no matter what the cost would involve. Do you see that? Knowing that he was her head, ultimately responsible for his marriage relationship to her, he willingly did what Adam did not. The Son said to his Father, "Father, she, she, she has done wrong and offended but hold Me responsible."

Our Father in heaven, we thank You for our Lord Jesus Christ and all that we learn of Him, that One that sacrificed even His own life for the welfare of His bride. Thank You, Father, for even giving us a picture even within His life of what is part and parcel with headship, just owning responsibility for the relationship, owning responsibility for the welfare of the relationship. Forgive us, Father, of so much looking like our daddy, saying, "She, she, she," when You never came in saying, "Eve, where are you?" Lord, help us men to digest the profundity of this teaching of headship. Help us, Lord, to understand that it is miles and miles and miles away from being a position of lording it over or oppressing another. Help us, Lord, to see in our Lord Jesus Christ what headship looks like, a complete and utter crucifixion, all for the welfare of our bride. Lord, we

pray that You would deepen our understanding of this indicative and help us, Lord, to not move on to the imperatives and the duties until we have properly assessed this role that You have given to us that is inescapable. And Lord, even as men, as husbands, seeing our failures, help us, Lord, to be Christians in the matter, to look again and again and again by faith to our great Husband, the Husband of his bride, the Lord Jesus Christ, and find in Him forgiveness of our sins and find in Him strength to carry on faithfully for we pray this, Lord, in the name of our great Husband who never failed, our Lord Jesus. Amen.