

Spirit-filled Marriage, Part I

Ephesians 5:22-33

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Introduction

As we move along through the book of the Ephesians,

- I want to back up for a moment to remind of you the overall structure of this most excellent letter.

In the very first chapter, Paul sets forth the wonderful things that God has done for those who are in Jesus Christ...

- He says that He has chosen us that we should be partakers of every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...
- He has appointed that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...
- That He has adopted us as sons...
- That He has restored us who were estranged by sin through redemption by the shedding of Christ's blood...we are pardoned and justified...
- That He has given us the Holy Spirit to begin that work in us by joining us to Christ and working new life in us...

And then Paul keeps on trying to impress us with how wonderful all this really is...

- That we will actually be brought to live in perfect communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in heaven...
 - That Christ has so cleansed us and will so work in our lives that we may live in that holy communion of perfect love with Him!
- We who were dead in sins have been made alive and are brought together as a community to live in hope and participation together in this high calling.
 - Gentiles who were cut off are brought into these promises by the blood of Christ...
 - and we are being fitted together into a household, a dwelling place, for God.
- And then Paul goes on with more yearning that we will come to grasp the love of Christ demonstrated to us in all that He has done to bring this great blessing to us!
 - It is such a marvellous calling...
 - it is difficult for us grasp the significance and wonder of it all!
 - to think that we will be where Christ is and that we will be like Him as He is in His manhood.

When we get to chapter 4, Paul begins to exhort us to walk worthy of our calling...

- to act like those who have been given such a glorious hope,
 - to act like those who have had grace lavished upon them...
 - to act like those who are already participating in the beginnings of the new life.
- He tells us that we should put off the old man and put on the new man...
 - He gives us down to earth details of what that is all about...
 - for example, that we stop stealing and start giving...
 - or that we are to replace rotten words with words of grace that edify...
- He tells us that we should aspire to imitate our heavenly Father in all our behaviour, walking in love as Christ has loved us...
 - not all sensitive and ready to flare up, but tenderhearted and forgiving.
- And then he talks about purity opposition (rather than participation) in the dark ways of the world...

And just lately, we have been looking at the command in Ephesians 5:18 that we are to be filled with the Spirit...

- I have explained to you that in pagan religion,
 - a person is said to be filled with the Spirit when he starts exhibiting strange behaviour...
 - the spirit takes him over and carries him away into bizarre behaviour...
 - but Paul's teaching is quite different from that...

He describes the fullness of the Spirit as...

- singing the Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs with our hearts fully accompanying our lips...
 - We see what God has done and we praise Him for it.
- living a life of gratitude before God for everything—
 - realising that if we are in Christ, God is using everything to bring us more and more into the new life...
 - and living out of a root of gratitude for what we have in the gospel...
- and then in verse 21 he describes the Spirit-filled life as one in which we submit to one another in the fear of the Lord...

- I explained to you last week that the word submit literally means “to line up under each other.”
 - The idea is that each one of us, when filled with the Spirit, joyfully takes our place,
 - whether it be a place of leadership or a place of following.
 - We are neither reluctant to take our god-given responsibilities, nor are we reluctant to submit to those God has placed over us.
- I also showed you that Paul then describes three examples of relationships that involve “lining up under each other:”
 - In Eph 5:22-33, He speaks of the husband-wife relationship...
 - In Eph 6:1-4, He speaks of the parent-child relationship...
 - In Eph 6:5-9, He speaks of the master-servant relationship...

It is my desire, over the next few weeks,

- to look at each of these relationships that we may understand how they are affected by a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ—
 - by the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Remember what the Scriptures teach us about the filling of the Holy Spirit...

- Jesus poured out the Spirit after He had finished His work of redemption and had ascended into heaven...
 - The Spirit was poured out so that we might be filled with Him now that Christ had been revealed and His work had been accomplished.
 - The Spirit’s work in us is to cause us to see Christ...
 - To see our need of Him as sinners, fit only for condemnation and wrath...
 - To see the depth of His love as the one who went to the cross for us...
 - And to change us so that we want to be reconciled to God and to become like Jesus—to become those who are holy as He is holy and who love as he loves.
 - It is a whole new life...
 - And obviously this new life is going to affect our marriages and our parenting and our labour.
 - Over the next few weeks, we want to look at how...

And so as we begin with Spirit-filled marriage, I want you to see this morning...

- That the relationship God ordained for husbands and wives is parallel to the relationship He ordained for Christ and the church!
 - That as God appointed it,
 - a husband’s love for His wife is supposed be like Christ’s love for the church,

- and a wife's submission to her husband is supposed to be exactly like the churches submission to Christ (like it ought to be).
- How can I put this succinctly?
 - **I want to show you that the union of husband and wife is analogous to the union of Christ and His Church.**

I. You can see clearly, if you look over Eph 5:22-33, that this comparison runs all the way through the passage.

A. Notice how many times the word "as" is used in drawing this comparison...

- in verse 22—wives to submit to their husbands **as** to the Lord...
- in verse 23—the husband is head of the wife **as** also Christ is head of the church...
- in verse 24 it the as comes at the beginning—**as** the church is subject to Christ so let wives be to their own husbands.
- in verse 25—husbands love your wives just **as** Christ loved the church.

B. Now look at verse 28—it begins with the word "so"

- In verse 25-27, Paul has just explained how Christ gives Himself wholly to do good for the church are her head...
 - He goes way out of His way to rescue her from her totally ruined condition...
 - He loves her so much that He does what was necessary to secure her pardon and cleansing—
 - He gives Himself wholly to it...
- And then, after showing all that love He exercised for His church,
 - Paul says,
 - **so...** husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies.

TRANS> It is clear that Paul is saying here that the conduct of the husbands should be like that of Christ

- and that the conduct of wives should be like the church joined to Christ...
 - the true church—
 - those who give themselves in service to Christ because their eyes have been opened to see what Christ has done for them and to embrace it...
- We are going to look at the particulars of how a wife's conduct and a husband's conduct is to be affected next week...

- But this morning,
 - I want to show you the structural similarity between the husband's relationship with his wife and Christ's relationship with the church...
 - You have to understand how the relationships are structurally the same before you can see how your behaviour in those relationships ought to be the same.
 - We have seen that these relationship are compared,
 - but what is about them that makes them suited to such comparison?
- **Christ's relationship with the church is comparable to a husband's relationship with his wife because...**

II. Both are relationships involving unity with headship.

A. First, let's look at how both relationships bring two together as one.

1. Paul reminds us in verse 31, that in marriage,
 - as it was instituted by God in the beginning,
 - a man and a woman become one flesh.
 - Verse 31 is a quote from Genesis 2:24:
 - Eph 5:31: For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.
- a. It should be understood that this oneness is what we might call a legal bond or a covenant bond...
 - When you sign a legal document—such as on a loan to purchase a car,
 - you are joined together with the creditor so that you have obligations to him by law—by virtue of your purchase agreement.
 - You are legally joined together so that a portion of your future income belongs to the creditor.
- b. In the same way, marriage creates a covenantal bond between a man and a woman that binds their lives together in a very close intimacy...
 - 1) It is referred to in the scriptures a covenant of companionship...
 - For example, in Malachi 2, the Lord charges men who had divorced their wives because, He says,
 - “she is your companion and your wife by covenant.”
 - He calls it treachery

- 2) This covenant of companionship creates a relationship that is even greater than the relationship between parent and child...
 - A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife...and the two become one flesh.
 - This is a relationship that is never to be broken without injustice.
 - It is properly an intimacy that brings a man and woman together in such a way that their lives are truly bound up together...
 - so that what the one does affects the other,
 - so that the needs of one become effectively the needs of the other...
 - they are intimately tied together socially, physically, financially, politically, and even spiritually so that what one does affects the other.

c. Sexual intimacy is involved in their union...

- 1) In 1 Cor 6, Paul even says that a man who takes a prostitute is made one with her...
 - His problem in such a relationship is that by engaging in sexual intimacy with her,
 - he takes what belongs only to the oneness of marriage and brings it into a relationship where God has not authorised such intimacy.
 - He is, in a sense, tearing himself apart by becoming one with someone with whom he has no covenant bond...
 - He is ignoring God's requirement to live in a permanent bond with the one he has intimate relations with.
- 2) Again, you see in this that it is a bond established by God's institution—by what He has appointed and required...
 - When a marriage is torn apart by disobedience...
 - whether it be by cantankerous behaviour—by rotten words and such...
 - or by adultery and fornication...
 - the person is guilty of separating what God has joined together!
 - It is a violation of a covenant obligation before God who has made the husband and wife one...

TRANS> But now look...

2. Christ's relationship with His church also creates oneness or unity between Him and His church...

- a. Paul has already spoken about this several times in Ephesians...
 - Back in Eph 2,
 - He made much about how, through Christ, the Gentiles are brought into one body with the Jews...
 - There are not two bodies with two plans...one for Jews and one for Gentiles...
 - there is only one people...
 - And now that Christ has come, that new people is made up of Jews and Gentiles.
 - There is only one body.

- b. Now in Ephesians 5:30,
 - Paul says expressly that “we are members of His body.”
 - members of Christ’s body.
 - In verse 32 he states that this is a mystery...
 - That means that it is something that is now revealed to us that was not understood before...
 - It is very similar to the mystery that now the Gentiles one with the Jews...

- c. It is very important for you, as Christians, to understand this mystery that is revealed in Christ...
 - Before Jesus came,
 - it was not understood that the Lord would actually become one with His people in the way that He become one with us in Christ.
 - The people of old were promised that He would be their God and that He would forgive their sins...
 - They were promised that somehow He would take away their sins, but they did not yet understand how He would do this...
 - They did not understand that the Son of God Himself would actually come from heaven and take to Himself human flesh—
 - And then be covenantally joined to us in such an intimacy that we would be one with Him...
 - One, so that our sins would be His sins and His righteousness would be our righteousness—
 - as if we were one organism...

- One, so that in His death on the cross,
 - we all died to sin, and that by His resurrection, we are all given new life...
 - so that as soon as we are joined to Him by faith,
 - we obtain new life in Him—as one with Him...
 - His righteousness becomes our righteousness.

TRANS> You see how our lives are wonderfully bound up—tied together—by God’s institution—by the relationship that He established between us and Christ...

- We need to realise that what God ties together by covenant is truly tied together.
 - It is one because God, by His institution, has made it to be one.
 - This covenantal unity and oneness is common to both marriage and to the relationship of Christ and His church.
- Now let’s look at the second similarity between these two relationships...
 - and would be that...

B. Both relationships are a unity involving headship... where there is a member who is head of the body.

1. In this we may think of the Trinity where you have one God in three persons...
 - and clearly the Father is head...
 - This is expressly stated in 1 Cor 11:3, where it says that the head of Christ is God...
 - but is evident all through the scriptures—
 - for example, it is the Son who always obeys the Father and not the other way around...
 - and it is the Father who sends the Son and the Holy Spirit, but the Son and the Holy Spirit do not send the Father.
 - It is a relationship of perfect unity and concord in which each delights in His place and joyfully serves the other.

TRANS> Now it should come as no surprise if God should pattern His creation after Himself...

- after all, we are made in His image...
 - And so it is not surprising to find that
2. God appointed one party to be head over the other in marriage...

- a. That one should submit to the other who was to lead in love.
 - Marriage, as He designed it, is meant to be a reflection (an image or picture) or the relationship of God the Father with the other members of the Trinity...
 - It is supposed to be as beautiful and harmonious as the Trinity!
 - The wife's submission is not demeaning...
 - it is analogous to the submission of the Son of God who is fully equal with the Father, yet subject to Him as head.

- b. In fact, the very beauty of the marriage relationship is to be found in the two living in their distinctions of authority and function...
 - It is stated in very clear language in verse 23 that the husband is the head of the wife.
 - That means that the husband is to represent his wife and to take responsibility for their life together as one.
 - He is to use His authority to do good to her.
 - And the wife is to joyfully support him in his leadership, and to submit to him...
 - In this way, they are to be one—in a blending together as leader and follower...
 - They are not to be a body with two heads, but a body with one head that functions harmoniously.
 - It should be realised as well that from the beginning,
 - God constituted the man and the woman to be suited to their respective roles.
 - He constituted the man to lead and the woman to respond...
 - When the man and his wife are blended together as He ordained,
 - there is a completeness and perfection that delight them both.

TRANS> But now let me tell you about a most marvellous headship...

3. Now that Christ has come and has made Himself one with His people—
 - a. He also has become the head of the body, just as the husband is head of the wife.
 - God has made Him head over all His covenant people—over the entire church of God...
 - You can see that this is also expressly stated in verse 23:

- Eph 5:23: “For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church.”

TRANS> But let me show you how excellent it can be to have a head like Jesus Christ...

b. It means so much to have Christ as our head!

1) It means that He takes responsibility for us—

- Paul says, “and He is the Saviour of the body!”
- As our head,
 - He takes responsibility for whole ruined mass of us!
 - As head, He treats our sin as if it were His own... for we are now His body by covenant!

2) He would not have a sinful body!

- Therefore, when He became one with us,
 - He went to the cross, bearing our sins as His own—as the sins of His own body...
 - He took full responsibility for the wrongs that we had done because He became our head!
- Neither will He have a rebellious body...
 - Therefore, He pours out His Spirit on us to change us so that we put off the old man and put on the new man that is renewed in His likeness (Him who is our head).
 - And He promises that when we see Him and are joined to Him in heaven, we will be like Him!
- Furthermore, as our head, he instructs us, protects us...
 - as it says in verse 29, He nourishes us and cherishes us...
 - He provides that loving care of a nursing mother over her children...
 - looking after all our needs and jealously defending us from all harm so that everything becomes subservient to our salvation.

3) You see that having Christ as our head changes everything for us!

- because He is indeed the Saviour of the whole body...
- Just think about it!

- If He were not the head of the church, there would be no salvation for us at all...
- That is why we refuse to acknowledge any other head of the church but Christ.

TRANS> Now the point is, that the headship and oneness in marriage is the very same sort of headship and oneness that we have in Christ.

- And if the headship and oneness in Christ is exercised in such a wonderful way, so ought the headship and oneness of marriage!
- The two relationships are perfectly suited to be laid up beside each other for comparison...

III. This structural similarity between marriage and the church is marvellous because it means that one relationship informs the other...

- In other words,
 - A. By looking at marriage, we gain greater insight into what it means to be one with Christ and to have Him as our head...
 - 1. For example, every married woman knows how much her life is tied up with that of her husband—
 - a. Just to use a very simple illustration,
 - If he is a man who works hard and manages his wealth well,
 - If he is kind and judicious with his money, that brings great benefit to her.
 - If, on the other hand, he is a lazy man who drains away the family resources with his habits,
 - she suffers and struggles because she is one with him and because he is her head.
 - b. To use another illustration...
 - If a woman has a husband who brings God's word into the home and who eagerly searches the scriptures to guide them in their worship...
 - and leads them to a sound church—and even chooses where to live based on the availability of a sound church,
 - it will bring great spiritual blessing to his whole household!
 - His wife will be greatly benefited by His headship.
 - 2. The point is, that no matter what kind of husband she has,
 - she understands the effect of having a head...for good or for bad...

- and this helps her to realise how marvellous it would be to have a head who gave Himself for her to nourish and cherish her—
 - as Christ does the church.
- Knowing, from marriage, the power and influence of a head,
 - we are able to understand how excellent it is to have Christ as our head.
 - From marriage, we understand by analogy what headship is like and it makes it more clear and meaningful to us to be told that Christ is our head.

TRANS> And, at the same time,

B. By looking at the church's relationship to Christ, we gain greater insight into our marriages and what they ought to be.

1. That is primarily what Paul is doing in our text—

- He is showing us what marriage ought to look like by showing us what Christ and His relationship with the Church looks like!
- He is saying,
 - “husbands, look at Christ to see what kind of head you ought to be!”
 - “wives, look at the church as subdued by Christ to see what kind of wife you ought to be!”

2. When we see how Christ dealt with the church which is His bride, we come to understand how every husband ought to treat His bride...

- And when we see how the church responds, not in our sin, but by the grace of God which causes us to submit to Him,
 - we see how a wife ought to respond to her husband!

C. And in this, I hope you can see how the filling of the Spirit produces this kind of marriage!

- It not that the Spirit just zaps us so that we have a better marriage...
 - No—remember...

1. The Spirit reveals Christ to us...

a. He causes us to understand what Christ has done for us!

- He causes the word of God that tells us about Christ to be more and more understood—
 - for us to grasp the great love of a Saviour who leaves heaven to come and die for us on the cross...
 - and who constantly cares for us...

- As He works in us, He causes us to come to a greater and greater appreciation and understanding of Christ and His work...
 - with the result that we give ourselves more and more to Him as His bride...
 - And as He does,
 - We yearn to be more and more like Christ in our relationships.

- b. When we learn that our marriages are the same sort of relationship that we have with Christ,
 - We want our marriages to be just like our relationship with Him.
 - We are so delighted about what He is as our head that if we are husbands, we want to be just like Him as the head of our homes...
 - We want to give ourselves for our wives as Christ has given Himself for us.
 - And if we are wives, we want to show how much we delight in His headship by submitting to our husband's headship...
 - believe me—that is the best way to show what you think of Christ.

- c. The point is, if you are truly filled with the Spirit (not just think you are)
 - you will want your part of the marriage (as a husband or as a wife) to show forth the glory of all that we have in Christ...
 - How He, by His great love and grace as your head, makes you,
 - who used to be a rebel, into a submissive wife...
 - And how He, by His great love, makes you,
 - who used to be self-centred male into a husband who considers the needs of His wife as if they were His own needs.

- 2. Now you might say to this...
 - a. “But this frustrating—
 - “you don’t know my husband—
 - “he doesn’t care if our relationship is like that of Christ and the church...
 - or “you don’t know my wife—
 - “she has no interest in patterning our marriage after Christ and the church...

- “The Holy Spirit has not opened her eyes...”

1) Okay, that is fine...

- You have a spouse who is not filled with the Spirit—
 - perhaps even a believer, but not filled with the Spirit—
 - or not as much as you would like...
- But I would submit to you that in such a case,
 - you have just as much opportunity to show forth your part of the relationship in a way that honours Christ as the one who has a godly spouse!
 - In fact, you have even more opportunity in a way!

a) Husband, take a look at Hosea...

- He showed us more about the love of Christ by continuing to love his rebellious wife than most other men do by loving a godly wife!
- And I will tell you that if you are the kind of husband you really ought to be,
 - there are not many wives that will continue to rebel!
 - There is very little counsel for husbands with ungodly wives because it is a very rare thing...
- But even if you do have a wife that is intractable...
 - you can still learn of Christ and show forth his love by way you conduct yourself as a husband to her...
 - Afterall, Christ came to us initially when we were completely rebellious—he loved us while we were sinners...
 - And even now we are still sinners and how he continues to love us with patience.
 - You are not prevented from honouring him in your marriage by an ungodly wife...

b) And wives—it is the same for you...

- Do you have a husband who is disobedient to the Lord?
 - How much more will you show the beauty of a gentle spirit than by cheerfully submitting to such a man?
 - Of course not if he asks you to sin—you do not submit to that—
 - but otherwise, and in your attitude toward the man.

- Peter talks about this very thing in 1 Peter 3.
 - Your patience is not as apparent when you have a godly husband as it is when you have an ungodly husband...
 - When you have an ungodly husband, you can show the world your trust in Christ and your love for Christ by submitting to your husband as you do the Lord...
 - with the same gentleness and joyfulness and completeness.
 - Isn't that what you are told to do in Eph 5:22?
 - Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord?
 - I tell you,
 - that will do more to win your husband than nagging him and being a pain to him,
 - Oh yes, nagging him may get him to leave you alone—
 - It may drive him out to the bars or to his television or his computer...
 - But it will do little to attract him to the religion you profess!
 - I Peter 3 is clear about that...
 - But besides, submission is what your Lord calls you to do...
 - If you are really submissive to the Lord, you will be submissive to your husband.
- b. Another will say— “But what am I to do? I don't have either a husband or a wife. How can I benefit from this instruction?”
- 1) Well, what does the scripture say about that?
- In 1 Cor 7, it says that you are to concern yourself with pleasing the Lord...
 - You can be engaged in more direct service to your Lord in a way.
 - It is addressing women in particular,
 - And it says that the married woman is concerned about how she may please her husband (and so she should be)
 - but that the unmarried woman has only one to please, and that is Christ.

- 2) This is not advocating a life of isolation in some sort of higher spiritual state...
 - That was an error that found its way into the early church...
 - No, the apostle makes it clear that he expects unmarried persons to use their time in service to others...
 - You are to be eagerly looking for ways to please Jesus your husband by caring for the members of His body...
 - You aren't tied down to a husband or to children when a need arises that the married members are unable to meet...
 - There are a lot of single men and women that are exemplary in this regard!
 - But sadly, it is often the busiest woman in the church who has eight loads of laundry a week and a multitude of mouths to fill who also does the most in the way of caring for strangers and outcasts and the sick...
 - It ought not to be that way!
 - And kudos to you unmarried persons who are shining examples of what it means to be the bride of Christ!
 - Make the most of your opportunities!
 - Make it your goal to be at least as busy about serving others as the mother of many children and you will do well in honouring your Lord.
- c. And now let's get really honest and see if there is not a third objection...
- 1) Are there not some of you who must frankly admit that if the truth were to be known, you really just don't have the heart for all this...
 - that you really don't have a very strong desire to honour Christ as a submissive wife or as a husband who sacrificially gives himself for the needs of his wife?
 - I am sure that many of you would have to admit that this is all too true...
 - probably all of you!
 - 2) So what can you do?
 - Go back to verse 18—
 - Ephesians 5:18—"Be filled with the Spirit!"
 - You will say,
 - "So how am I to do that? Just grunt and strain?"

3) No my brothers and sisters, you look to Christ as He is revealed in the Word.

- That is what I keep telling you!
 - The Spirit is the one who reveals Christ to you...
 - When you are filled with Him, He is the One who opens your eyes to see how lovely He is,
 - to see how great His love to you is...
 - to see how deep in sin you were and how He bore that sin for you—even the wrath and curse of God for you...
- He shows you how full and rich and free His grace is!
 - And when you see this, you yearn to submit to Him...
 - You yearn to obey Him...
 - You yearn to honour Him...
 - You are glad even to be persecuted if it will honour him and you can share in the fellowship of His sufferings.
 - God's Spirit changes you by causing you to see Christ as He is...
 - You are transformed into His likeness as you behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—that is, as it is revealed in Him.
- When you see what kind of head Christ is,
 - It will make you eager to be a head like Him if you are a husband...
 - and if you are a wife, to submit to your head because of that sweet, satisfied disposition that now fills your entire life with devotion to Christ and His way.

Next week, we will look at the particular duties to which husbands and wives are called.