

**Ephesians Chapter 5: 22-24 & 33b; “Submit to Your Own Husband”, Message # 46 in a series entitled – “The Greatness of His Power”, a Bible Study prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall for May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023.**

In our last message we talked about submitting to one another in the body of Christ. We thought together about submitting to one another in the fear of God. To submit to one another in the fear of God is to have regard for what God has commanded us to do in relation to one another in the body of Christ. The purpose of this is so that we might truly build one another up in our faith. To speak the truth in love, we need to remember that it is God who is at work in us, both to will and work according to His good will for our lives. And we should remember that we are partakers of grace together in one spiritual body in the local church. Now, at this time, we want to go on to think about what it means for a Christian wife to submit to her own husband.

This section on husbands and wives runs from verse 22 to verse 33. It is quite extensive because it is so very important. Concerning the responsibility of wives to their own husbands we want to take notice of certain things. 1<sup>st</sup> of all – We will talk about the godly submission of a wife. 2<sup>nd</sup> – We will talk about headship in relation to marriage. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – We will talk about how the wife and the church of Christ are alike in submission.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Let’s talk about the godly submission of a wife.**

This submission which is rendered by the wife to her husband is as unto the Lord. This is a good place to begin because it is important for all of us who are married to realize that all of our submission to one another, but especially the wife to her husband, is rendered as unto the Lord. The word “submit” or “be subject” here is not actually in the text in verse 22 in the original Greek. It is actually carried over as an extension of what is being said by Paul in verse 21, where the verb “be subject” is actually found when it says – “Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ”, or out of reverence for Christ. The words in the Greek there are – ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ.

If you look down at verse 33, when it says that the wife must see to it that she respects her husband, the word “respect” there is phobeo in the Greek. It can be translated “fear” or “reverence”, but here in this context it means respect which leads to the right kind of regard. It is respect which leads the wife to want to submit to her own husband. In looking up the word in Webster’s 1828 Dictionary I found that submit means – “To yield, resign or surrender to the power, will or authority of another. Or in a larger wider sense – To refer; to leave or commit to the discretion of the judgment of another; as, to submit a controversy to arbitrators; to submit a question to the court.”

Both of these definitions have relevance for our study. A wife will be yielding herself to her husband’s being her spiritual head. She will be consciously letting him lead her, in the development of their relationship with each other, even as Christ Himself leads her. Christ is her Savior and Lord. She is very willing to submit to Him as her Savior and Lord. She should have this same willingness to be led along by her husband, even though he is not as good and a holy a man as Christ is by any means. This kind of language of “being led along” is found being used by Paul in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9: 1-5.

“Am I not an apostle?” “Am I not free?” “Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?” “Are you not my work in the Lord?” “If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you.” “For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.” “My defense to those who examine me is this: ‘Do we have no right to eat and drink?’ “Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?” So, the words – “take along” can be translated – to lead along, or lead about, a wife, a sister in the Lord that an apostle was married to. Yes, Paul had that right, but he chose to remain single so that he could do more work for the Lord. And they describe for us the kind of submission that a wife renders to her husband. He is leading her along as the Lord is leading him along. She is to follow his lead, and to be of one mind and one heart with him in all that he does for the Lord. So, since this is true, then the wife should understand that Christ is leading both of them together through their shared life, by His having designated her husband the head.

The husband has this delegated authority over her, but that authority is to be exercised in the gentle humble and loving way of leading her into the truth of what the Lord would have them to do as a couple. The Lord knows that for this to be a good, God-glorifying working relationship between the two of them, she must have a loving respect for her husband. She should be willing to submit to him as unto her Lord. The wife may object to this submission based upon the fact that her husband is not a very good leader. In fact, she may say – My husband is not a man who obeys the word in the way that he should.

But look over at 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3: 1-6 – “Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.” “Do not let your adornment be merely outward – arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel – rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.” “For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord, whose daughter you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.”

This is a very revealing passage of Scripture concerning the wife being submissive to her own husband. Even if some husbands do not obey God’s word in the way that they should, yet the wife should still be submissive to her husband. Not submissive in the sense of participating in any of his sins, or in arguing with him about how stupid or unreasonable he is in his expectations, but rather studying to win him without a word. That is, by her chaste conduct. The word “chaste” there is *hagnos* in the Greek. And it means innocent, modest, pure, and clean.

The wife can show by her humble submissive conduct, the truth of the word which she is trying to win her husband to. Whether it is a decision that he is making or something that he is trying to accomplish but going about it in a way which is not God’s way, she can still study to win him to the right way by her own chaste conduct. The NASB renders this – “as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior”. There is nothing so winning in a marital relationship as wife who is kind, gentle, and respectful; a woman who is inoffensive, and yet consciously, lovingly, trying to be of help.

This is not simply a tactic which is used outwardly, but it is the hidden person of the heart which is the source of this. A gentle and a quiet spirit which is precious in the sight of God, as it says in verse 4 here. This was what some holy women of old, who are mentioned in the Bible were like. Sarah is particularly mentioned here. She is mentioned as having obeyed Abraham, (submitted to him) calling him her Lord. That was a precious thing in the sight of God and her husband. Where in the Scriptures does it say that Sarah called Abraham her lord? It was when the Lord told her husband that she was going to have a child. She who was old. An impossible situation.

Genesis 18: 9-12 – “Then they said to Abraham, ‘Where is Sarah your wife?’ “So he said, ‘Here in the tent.’ “And he said, ‘I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.’ “(Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.” “Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.” “Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, ‘After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?’ “And the Lord said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh, saying ‘Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?’ “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

This is where she called Abraham “lord”. It was at the time of her greatest surprise and unbelief. This shows that her submission was there at that point, just as much as at other times in their marriage. She was still willing to submit to him, even in this situation in which she had her doubts. So, it ought to be with every godly wife.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> – Let’s talk about headship in relation to marriage.**

Verse 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.” Paul is saying that godly submission in marriage is better established with a recognition of God’s appointment of the man as the head of his wife, even as Christ is also the head of the Church. Turn with me over to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 11, verses 1-3. Paul says here – “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” “Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the

traditions just as I delivered them to you.” “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”

Paul was saying that he was imitating Christ by his submission to God’s will for his life and ministry. He would imitate Him in His submission to God. When Paul says that the husband is the head, he is saying that he is the one whom God has appointed to make the major decisions and to rule over their household. In 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy chapter 3, verse 4, he says that in regard to qualifications for an elder that a man must be one who “rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence”. The man’s appointment is to rule and to govern and to oversee all that relates to the household, and their life together in relation to God.

He has spiritual and physical responsibilities in relation to overseeing what they are building by their life together. In their marriage this includes all that the wife will be doing in the household. The husband oversees this in both a general and particular sense. But all of the commands of the New Testament teach us that he should do this in such a way that his wife knows his love for her. By his showing her love, she will know that her thoughts concerning her own responsibilities are important. And they will be taken into consideration in his thoughts of governing the household.

He will interact with her over the particulars of her responsibilities. And he will do so in such a loving and thoughtful way, that she will be pleased with her husband’s headship and governance of their family. The headship of the man over his wife in the marital relationship is one of authority, but it does not mean that the husband acts in a dominating or domineering way over her. He is not making decisions unilaterally, without talking with her about them. He will show her his reasons for doing what he is doing, and why he is thinking the way that he does. He will justify what he is doing by the truth of the Bible and what God commands.

He will not be standing over her, trying to control her in everything that she does. He will not be simply trying to enforce his own will upon her and referring to that as his headship. Rather, he sees himself continually under the headship of Christ. He sees himself as accountable to Christ in everything he says and plans and does. The husband will be trying to be like Christ in his own character and conduct in his relationship with his wife. This is why it says here in verse 23, that Christ is the Savior of the body.

Why is that put in here? It is here so that husbands will become more like Christ in what He did in becoming our Savior. His love and care for the church ought to be our model in relation to our wives. We will talk about the husband’s responsibility in relation to Christ’s giving of Himself more, when we get to our next study in verse 25. But when it says in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11: 3 that the head of Christ is God, that statement reflects the submission and subjection of Christ to God the Father. And that submission and subjection was so that He might accomplish our redemption, the task for which He was sent by the Father, into this world.

Even so, one of the wife’s greatest tasks is to see herself as her husband’s helper in everything. Genesis 2: 18 – “And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’” God’s design for a woman in marriage is that she will be her husband’s helper. By thinking about her husband, and what she can do to help him, this is fulfilling her role. A wife should think about what God has called her husband to do in this life. She should think of how she can help him in the household, and in his occupation, if it seems right to him.

She should think about how she can promote his gifts, both physical and spiritual. And how she can contribute to help fulfill his ambitions and desires to do what God has gifted and called him to do. This is how she will fulfill her role as his wife.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> – Let’s talk about how the wife and the church of Christ are alike in submission.**

Verse 24 says – “Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” It will be good for us in thinking about what is being said here to ask ourselves – In what ways is the church subject to Christ? Well, she is subject to Him in everything. She is subject to Him in her dependence upon Him for grace and His help in keeping His commandments. She has taken Him as her only spiritual Husband. Wives should submit to their own husbands, not just any man. Since

our exclusive spiritual loyalty and love as Christ's Church is to Him, even so, every wife should love her husband to please him and to even obey him. The Church is called to obey Christ in everything.

A couple of verses in closing will help us to see this truth. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7, verses 32-34 – “But I want you to be without care.” “He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord – how he may please the Lord.” “But he who is married cares about the things of the world – how he may please his wife.” “There is a difference between a wife and a virgin.” “The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit.” “But she who is married cares about the things of the world – how she may please her husband.” This is a correct view of the wife's responsibility in marriage. She studies how she may please her husband.

Look also at Titus chapter 2, and verses 3-5 – “The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to too much wine, teachers of good things – that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.” To be subject to Christ is to obey His word, in order to do it. Even so, for a wife to be subject to her husband is to obey his words and counsel in as much as they reflect the truth of God's word.

That is not a hard law or a hard yoke. It should be an easy one where the wife is loved and she loves her husband. Matthew 11: 28-30 – “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” So, husbands ought to make obedience to themselves an easy task for their wives, because they are so much like Christ.