

Rhema Worship Center

Bible Study

Book of Ephesians Chapter 5 - verses 22 thru 28

**Verse 22:**

**Wives, submit to your own husbands,**

Paul commands wives to “submit to” or be “subject to” their own husbands. The operative verb *hupotasso* reappears in verse 24, where Paul says wives are to submit to “their own husbands in everything,” “just as the church is subject to Christ.” What is meant by submission? In its simplest form, the wife *allows* her husband to be head. In other words, there is no way a man can carry out his God-given headship without a submissive wife! In this regard there are three types of wives: (1) those that deny plain Bible teaching. These do not want to submit. (2) Those that believe what the Bible teaches on this subject, but do not practice it. They do this while giving lip-service to the need to obey the Bible teaching. (3) Those that believe the word of God and spend their lives practicing it. This last group may fall short, but they continue to try. Only this third group is pleasing to God. Certainly, no Christian ought to resent being in subjection to Christ, and if husbands were what they ought to be, their wives should not resent being in subjection to them. Nevertheless, even when all reasonable causes for voluntary subjection are absent (i.e., gentleness, kindness, wisdom, etc.), the wife is still obligated to be submissive to her husband *as to the Lord*. Marriage is something neither the female nor male ought to enter into lightly.

It is God's will for the Christian husband to be the head of the Christian home. It is God's will for the wife to let her husband lead. It is the will of God for a wife to serve her husband, and yes it is also the will of God for a husband to serve his wife as we will see. Actually verse 22 isn't so much about a wife submitting to the husband as it is a wife submitting to the lordship of Jesus Christ which is why it says submit to your husband as to the lord. A Christian wife's submission to her husband is her service to Christ. That's the way Jesus wants it to be.

**Question...How does this relate to wives who married prior to their coming to Christ? Are they subject to their husband who does not submit to Christ?**

**Question...How should a wife respond when her husband who says he is a Christian but he does not walk in gentleness, kindness or wisdom?**

## 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.**

In this verse, Paul gives the basis for his charge to the wives. The husband, he says, is head (*kephale*) of the wife *as* Christ is head of the Church. Husbands are given a perfect model to follow in Christ as Head and Savior of His body (the church). Christ will never do anything to harm the church, but will save it. Husbands exercising godly headship will never do anything to harm their wives, but will love, protect, and save them. They will save them from physical harm, from attacks on their character, from unhappiness (when possible), and from spiritual death. Jesus loved the church enough to die for it (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25), and godly husbands will strive for this same kind of love (I Corinthians 13).

God demands order in the home, and he has ordained that the husband must be the leader. God wants husbands to be Godly, to love Jesus, to go to church, to read the bible, and to pray. In short God wants Jesus to be the most important thing to a husband. Only then can a husband be the type of man that God wants him to be. It has been said before and should be said again, the best advice I could give any Christian man is: never marry a woman who will not let you lead. And to a Christian woman I would say: do not marry any man who you don't think is Godly enough to lead and therefore you would not trust to lead you.

*Question...How should a wife respond to a husband who pays the bills, does not cheat or stay out all hours of the night, but has not committed himself to Christ?*

*Question...how can you know before marriage if the wife will submit or if the husband is a Godly leader?*

## Verse 24

**Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.**

Since husbands have such an awesome responsibility to care for their wives, Paul again calls upon the wives to be subject to their own husbands. When a church refuses to submit to its head, it becomes an unfaithful church, and the same can be said of a wife who is not submissive to her husband. She is not just to submit in the things she likes, or areas where she agrees, but “in everything.” This phrase is all-encompassing. In other words, submission includes all aspects of life. This removes

the misunderstanding that some may have that submission simply refers to sexual intercourse or some other narrow realm. Since by God's decree marriage partners are "one flesh," God wants them to function together under one head, not as two autonomous individuals living together. Since Paul is so concerned about this unity, we ought to be also. This does not mean the wife is a robot without the ability to think for herself. Does any of this mean that the husband can rule his wife insensitively? Certainly not! The idea that anyone in authority should "lord it over" those he leads is ruled out by Paul elsewhere (II Corinthians 1:24), just as Peter insists that elders must not lord it over those who are obligated to obey them (I Peter 5:3). Paul takes this for granted. The husband has no authority to speak bitterly against his wife (Colossians 3:19), he certainly has no authority to beat or abuse her. (Paul handles the question of the husband's misuse of power momentarily in his words to husbands.) The important thing for the wife to know is that she is subject to her husband in everything, that is, that her submission involves all aspects of their relationship.

The Christian wife is commanded by God to let her husband lead. That means she should let him lead in spite of her feelings. It means she should let him lead without complaining just as the bible teaches that Christians should submit to Jesus in spite of feelings and without complaining. That's not to say that there can't be dialog between a husband and a wife, but in the end it is the husband who must answer for what goes on in the home.

What is being said in this scripture will go over like a lead balloon with any non-Christians who hears it and that's OK because God isn't talking to them anyway. This message is for Christian husbands and Christian wives and that is it

*Submit* is not a bad word. Submission is not a reflection of inferiority or lesser worth. Christ constantly submitted Himself to the will of the Father ([Luke 22:42](#); [John 5:30](#)), without giving up an iota of His worth.

To counter the world's misinformation concerning a wife's submission to her husband, we should carefully note the following...A wife is to submit to one man (her husband), not to every man. The rule to submit does *not* extend to a woman's place in society at large. A wife is to willingly submit to her husband in personal obedience to the Lord Jesus. She submits to her husband because she loves Jesus. The example of a wife's submission is that of the church to Christ. There is nothing said of the wife's abilities, talents, or worth; the fact that she submits to her own husband does not imply that she is inferior or less worthy in any way. Also notice that there are no qualifiers to the command to submit, except "in everything." So,

the husband does not have to pass an aptitude test or an intelligence test before his wife submits. It may be a fact that she is better qualified than he to lead in many ways, but she chooses to follow the Lord's instruction by submitting to her husband's leadership. In so doing, a godly wife can even win her unbelieving husband to the Lord "without words" simply by her holy behavior ([1 Peter 3:1](#)).

Submission should be a natural response to loving leadership. The submission of the wife to the husband does not allow the husband to be selfish or domineering. His command is to love, and he is responsible before God to fulfill that command. The husband must exercise his authority wisely, graciously, and in the fear of the God to whom he must give an account.

Commentator Matthew Henry wrote, "The woman was made out of Adam's side. She was not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved."

*Question...is it out of order in a marriage if the husband wants the wife to handle the finances and discipline the children?*

## Verse 25

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

Paul now addresses husbands. Love appears six times in 5:25-33, and it denotes the husband's duty to his wife. It is interesting to note that the husband's role—his headship—was stated in the section addressed to his wife (verse 23), and not in the section addressed to him. In other words, Paul does not tell the husband, "Be head over your wife!" Instead, he commands him twice to love his wife (verses 25, 28). The command for the husband to love his wife is illustrated by the analogy of Christ's love for the church, and by the way one loves his own body (verse 28), which is by nourishing and cherishing it (verse 29). In this verse, Paul emphasizes the self-giving, self-sacrificing character of the husband's love for his wife: it is to be like the love Christ had and continues to have for the church. It is with this kind of love that the apostle of Christ commands the husband to exercise his headship over his wife in everything.

In scripture love means seeking the greatest good of others. God wants Christian husbands to be good to their wives; to do what is in their best interest. Be good to her even if she is not good back. That's how Jesus is toward us.

By dying for us and paying for our sins Jesus treated us as if we were worth more than he is. Consequently, a husband is to treat his wife like she is worth more than he is. Someone says but my wife doesn't let me lead; she is always giving me a hard time. What do I do? You obey God; you love her as if she was as submissive as the Virgin Mary herself. You say, that's not fair and that's not easy. Since when has God said doing right would always be easy and fair--That's not biblical.

*Question...how do you think what we have been discussing in these verses relates to Christians who still find divorce their only option?*

*Question...can marital counseling save some marriages?*

## Verse 26

**That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.**

Christ loved the church so much that He died for it, that is, He purchased it with His own blood. The "washing of water" clearly refers to baptism (Hebrews 10:22; Titus 3:5), and the necessary conclusion one must make from this is that *all* the church (the sanctified and cleansed) had been baptized. Since Christ did all this *for* the church, husbands should be willing to do whatever is good and right *for* their wives.

Paul used the special relationships between a husband and wife to exemplify the intimate communion there is between Christ and the Church, and that relationship is patterned on Christ's sacrificial love for His church - for Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. But the sacrificial love that Christ has for His Church also has a cleansing element, as well as a sanctifying effect upon her.

The church is cleansed and purified by the washing of the water with the Word of God... for the Word of God is truth and light - the word of God is alive and powerful. The word of God exposes our innermost thoughts and desires and the one who trusts in Christ as their Savior has had their scarlet sins forgiven forever and have been covered in Christ's robe of righteousness. They have been washed white as snow, cleansed...purified and positionally sanctified in Him. Christ's love for His church is both a sacrificial and a sanctifying love.

*Question...has the sanctity diminished in marriages today?*

## Verse 27

**That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.**

The uniqueness of Christ's redemptive work on behalf of the church cannot be precisely imitated by the husband, but Paul seems to be teaching that just as Christ works to present His church to Himself as a glorious bride in a glorious marriage, so should the husband work to make his wife glorious and their marriage magnificent. The husband's love, like Christ's, was to be beneficial to his wife, just as Christ's love for the church is beneficial to it.

Of this love, Chrysostom wrote:

“Wouldst thou that thy wife should obey thee as the church obeys Christ? Do thou then care for her, as Christ for the church, even if thou must lay down thy life for her?—shirk not, shouldst thou suffer even this. Thou hast not yet matched all that which Christ hath done. For thou doest this after thou hast already won her, but he sacrificed himself for her that turned away from him and hated him; and when she was thus disposed, he brought her to his feet not by threats, or insults, or terror, or any such thing, but by this great solicitude. So do thou conduct thyself toward that wife of thine... Her that is the partner of thy life, the mother of thy children, the spring of thy joy, thou must not bind by terror and threats, but by love and gentleness.”

Throughout our life as we hear and meditate on the Word of God we are being refined and beautified through its purifying properties - and God did this so that in the day of Christ Jesus, His church (which is His body) will be perfected... without spot or wrinkle of any such thing - instead we will be made holy and blameless and transformed into His likeness of the only begotten Son of God.. To the praise and glory of our Father in heaven.

One day the Lord Jesus Christ will present the church to Himself at the wedding feast of the Lamb in all splendor. This will happen shortly after the rapture. The church will have been stripped of both the sin capacity and acts of sin. All Christians will receive their resurrection bodies. There will be no spot, stain, or growing old. The church will be completely set apart unto God, and no one will blame her for anything.

The church is the special object of Christ's delight ([Isa 62:5](#)). She is a special joy to Him. Because of His saving work, He holds the church in special regard and high honor. To Him, she is “glorious,” a strikingly beautiful bride that He has set aside for Himself. What is true of the church collectively is true of her individual

members. There is nothing that mars their spiritual beauty. Jesus holds a special love for her and those who belong to her.

*Question...how can we prepare ourselves to be the bride Jesus is coming to take away?*

## Verse 28

**So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.**

Seeing that Christ loved the church so much that he gave Himself up for it, men ought to also love their own wives as they do their own bodies. The love that Paul calls for here is *agape*—love that considers what is best for the one loved. Only when this kind of love is present can a husband love his wife as his own body. Generally speaking, we want what is best for our own physical bodies. When sick, we seek medical attention. When hot or cold, we seek comfort. When hungry, we obtain food. It is so natural to love ourselves that Christ used this as the standard by which we are to love our neighbor (Matthew 19:19). Paul wants the husband to become one with his wife to the extent that when he loves her, he loves himself. Just as all of us who are thinking rationally seek the best for ourselves, the husband who truly loves his wife and is exercising the headship that God has ordained will seek the best for his wife.

There is the same kind of love and union between husband and wife as there is between Christ and the church.

A husband's love for his wife should be like Christ's love for the church. Love is the highest responsibility of the husband to his wife. The husband should love his life as constituting his own body.

*Question...how does growing up in a non-loving home affect a man's ability to love his wife?*

*Question...can this type of love in verse 28 be taught or is it only spiritual?*

*Question...does salvation erase trauma?*