

Ephesians 5D

- As the Lord would have it, we are studying the last part of Ephesians 5 on Easter Sunday
 - Most years when Easter rolls around, I suspend my teaching of whatever book we're studying so I can focus on the meaning of the day
 - This year my travel schedule necessitates I stay in the text of Ephesians so I can finish the book before I depart
 - But the Lord's sovereignty doesn't care about my schedule
 - So He saw fit to leave us at an appropriate point in the book on this special day
 - So as we move forward in the study today, we find a topic that I'm pretty sure has never been preached on an Easter Sunday
 - But it's a topic that's quite appropriate on Easter, though it may not seem that way at first
 - Paul introduced our topic for today in v.21 where we ended last week
 - Paul told the church to be subject to one another in Christ
 - Meaning to live in subjection to the spiritual authorities in our lives, whoever they may be
 - This is a continuation of Paul's earlier teaching in v.17 that we should live wisely making the most of our time knowing the days are evil
 - We live to serve a mission for our Lord
 - Our time on earth isn't very long, and the evil in us and the world is constantly working against us
 - So we don't have time to be foolish, to waste even a single day on foolish pursuits of one kind or another
- And the Lord provides spiritual leadership in every believer's life to counsel us away from wasting time or being foolish
 - Nowhere is this more evident than in the home, where the Lord has structured relationships for the benefit of everyone concerned

- Having introduced the need for submission in the lives of wise Christians, he begins to elaborate on how to apply this principle in a Christian home

Eph. 5:22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Eph. 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

Eph. 5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

- Paul's teaching on submission runs from v.22 to Ephesians 6:9
 - In this section of the letter, Paul addresses submission of wives to husbands
 - And submission of husbands to their wives
 - Submission of children to their parents
 - And submission of parents to their children
 - Submission of slaves to masters
 - And submission of masters to their slaves
 - If that summary of this section surprised you, then it's probably because only one of these relationships gets any attention these days
 - That being Paul's opening command that a wife submit to her husband
 - This unbalanced view of the text is unfortunate for several reasons
 - First, it overshadows Paul's larger point that everyone is to be subject to one another, though in different ways
 - Everyone is to concern him or herself with the needs of others
 - So that no one is sacrificing more than another and all are being served
 - Secondly, the negative perspective many bring to Paul's instructions to wives turns history on its head

- Paul is portrayed as having something against women, when in reality the truth is exactly opposite
- Leon Morris put it this way:

After centuries of Christian teaching, we scarcely appreciate the revolutionary nature of Paul's views on family life set forth in this passage. Among the Jews of his day, as also among the Romans and the Greeks, women were seen as secondary citizens with few or no rights. The pious male Jew daily said a prayer in which he thanked God for not making him a woman. And he could divorce his wife by simply writing 'a bill of divorcement' (which must include the provision that she was then free to marry whomever she wanted). The wife had no such right."

- Paul is teaching that a wife is equal to her husband in the sense of submitting and receiving submission within the family
- Finally, if we hold Paul's teaching in contempt, we are holding God's word in contempt
 - Let's not pretend otherwise...the book of Ephesians is in the Bible for a reason
 - Paul's instructions on submission in this letter are scripture every bit as much as the Gospel of John or the letter of Romans
 - Therefore, we can no more dispute or ignore Paul's words here than on any other subject in which he was inspired to write
- Turning to his instructions, Paul says wives are to be subject to their own husbands
 - Before we look at what Paul is asking a wife to do, let's take note of what he didn't ask
 - Paul said a wife is to be subject to her own husband, not to all men
 - Paul is not calling for male dominance in every area of society
 - His only concern is for the relationship between a married couple
 - So a Christian woman may aspire to any opportunity that life offers
 - She may lead large organizations and command many under her charge, including men

- Biblical Christianity puts no limits on a Christian woman's authority save two things:
 - First, scripture commands that a woman may not assume leadership over men in the Church
 - Second, a wife may not assume leadership over her own husband
- Specifically, Paul instructs wives to be subject to their own husbands as to the Lord
 - The Greek word for subject is a military term meaning under the authority of another
 - It describes a voluntary subjection to a higher authority
 - Like a soldier enlisting in the military, he willingly subjects himself to the authority of his superiors
 - He entered willingly, but once in the role he becomes obligated to submit
 - A husband is the authority figure in the home
 - God has appointed a husband to rule over his family in all matters, and wives are to respect and support that authority
 - In a healthy marriage, a godly husband and wife will partner together in making decisions and running the household
 - And if you were to visit such a home, you might not even notice the husband's authority
 - The home would simply reflect the harmony of a family operating in submission to authority
- But we all know that sooner or later differences of opinion are inevitable in every marriage
 - A wife's preference concerning some matter will conflict with her husband's counsel
 - Under these circumstances, the word of God declares that the husband is the final authority in the home
 - Therefore, a wife must submit to a husband's authority in circumstances where they disagree

- Understandably, it's tempting for any wife to hear these words and seek for exceptions or qualifications
 - A wife might say she will gladly submit to her husband when he is making wise decisions
 - Or is living a godly example
 - Or treats her opinion with equal weight or speaks to her in kindness
- While these qualifications seem reasonable to our ears, they do not stand the test of scripture
 - First, such thinking defies the call to submit
 - If a wife only ever respects her husband's authority when she agrees with him, she has never practiced submission
 - It's merely "agreement"
 - True submission means obeying when you *don't* agree with the request
 - Secondly, Paul rules out all such exceptions by how he qualifies his instruction
 - At the end of v.22 Paul says that a wife's willingness to respect her husband's authority is comparable to her willingness to obey the Lord
 - Obviously, Paul isn't putting husbands on the same level of authority as the Lord
 - Paul is speaking in relative terms
 - His point is that a husband's authority is his by virtue of his identity as husband, not a position he must earn daily
 - Just as we obey Christ because He is the Lord
 - So shall wives respect and obey husbands because they are the head of the household
 - That authority doesn't turn on whether they make good decisions or even if they are walking with the Lord

- The Scriptures seems to acknowledge a wife's concern through the happenstance of language
 - In v.22 the Greek word for "own" is the word *idios* from which we get the word idiot
 - So more than a few students have taken note that the Lord tells wives to obey their idiot husbands
- Thirdly, in v.23 Paul says a husband's authority in the home serves as a model of Christ's headship over the church
 - As Christ is the head of the Church, so is a husband over his wife
 - Paul's point is that there is something more going on in Christian marriage than meets the eye
 - When husbands and wives observe their God-given roles, they are living out a testimony
 - We know that scripture calls Christ our Groom and the Church is His Bride
 - In other words, the Lord has designed the institution of marriage to picture the relationship we have with Christ by grace
 - We'll learn more about that relationship as we look at Paul's commands to the husband
 - But already it's clear that we're supposed to live out our marriages in a way that testifies to our faith
 - This chapter is Paul's call to missional living
 - So we're supposed to bring everything in our lives into conformance with our purpose in serving Christ
 - We can't afford to be foolish, to be short-sighted about anything, including how we approach marriage
 - So we should ask ourselves how do we make the most of our days in serving Christ?
- For wives that means respecting your husband's authority in your marriage as a testimony of your relationship with Christ
 - That's Paul's argument in v.24

- When the church lives in subjection to Christ, He is glorified
- The world comes to know what pleases Christ by seeing how we live in obedience to His word
- And a church that obeys Christ is a church being sanctified, becoming more like Christ
- Likewise, as a wife submits to her husband, even when he is foolish, she testifies to her relationship with Christ
 - She testifies that she obeys as a matter of faith, not based on personal desires or reason
 - And as a result, she moves in the direction of holiness and sanctification
- Remember, God's goal for us in this life isn't necessarily our happiness; it's our holiness
 - The Bible tells us that when we're in Heaven praising the Lord before His throne, we won't be saying love, love, love or joy, joy, joy
 - We will be saying holy, holy, holy because holiness is the defining characteristic of God
 - And it's our holiness that pleases our Lord
- Of course, a wife's role in the marriage is just the first of six relationships in Paul's list of submission
 - Though it's the one that gets all the attention, it's supposed to be met with an equally demanding call for submission on the part of the husband
 - That just as the wife submits to her husband's authority, so also the husband has a call to submit to his wife in a sense
 - Which leads us to the next person on the list, the husband

[Eph. 5:25](#) Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

[Eph. 5:26](#) so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

[Eph. 5:27](#) that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

[Eph. 5:28](#) So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;

[Eph. 5:29](#) for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,

[Eph. 5:30](#) because we are members of His body.

- The husband gets twice as many verses directed his way as did the wife, and they are no less demanding
 - Paul says the husband is to love his wife
 - The Greek word for love is *agape*, which means a self-sacrificial love
 - A husband is called to place his wife's needs above his own
 - Earlier, we said the wife must recognize her husband's superior position in directing the affairs of the marriage and home
 - Now Paul says God calls the husband to recognize the superior place of his wife's needs in the marriage and home
 - This too is a call to submission on the part of the husband
 - While the wife is called to submit to the authority of her husband...
 - The husband is called to submit to the needs of his wife
 - We could say husbands are called to place their own desires in subjection to the desires of their wives
- And here again, the standard Paul gives for how this should look in practice is Christ's example with the Church
 - Paul says Christ's love for the Church is evidenced in His willingness to lay His life down on the cross for us
 - Certainly, we know Christ the Man would have preferred not to go to the cross
 - We see this clearly in John's Gospel when Christ prays to the Father that he may avoid the cross if the Father would permit
 - In the end, the Father's will was that Christ would endure the shame of the cross

- And so Christ lay down His life obediently so that He might make the Church holy, sanctified
- By spilling His blood on that first Easter, Christ was paying the price for sin for all who place their trust in His sacrifice
- By His blood we may be cleansed, made holy through our faith in Him
- Specifically, in v.26 Paul says Christ cleansed us by washing or cleansing us by water
 - The word for water could be translated baptism
 - So Paul is saying we were made clean by a baptism of His word
 - As we come to believe the testimony of the word of God declaring the Gospel, we are washed clean of our sins
 - Being baptized by the Holy Spirit, Who comes to live in us at the moment of faith in Christ
- In v.27 Paul says that Christ made His sacrifice so that He might accomplish this work in each of us
 - So that He may present the Church to Himself in all her glory with no defect, holy and blameless
 - In a future day, when the full number of the Church saints has been made complete, the Lord will return to claim His Bride
 - On that day, we will all be resurrected into new sinless bodies, perfect and without blemish
 - And we will enter in His glory
 - Christ's sacrifice will have made possible that perfect, glorified Bride
 - And that's the picture we husbands are supposed to reflect in our approach to marriage
 - We are to sacrifice ourselves for the goal of glorifying our wives, of making them more holy
- In v.28, Paul gives men the true mark of how to love our wives in this way
 - Most guys like to think of themselves as chivalrous, willing to do anything for the woman they love

- We tell ourselves that we're willing to sacrifice anything
- "I'd take a bullet for my wife," we say
- "If a bad guy broke into my home in the middle of the night and tried to kill my wife, I would die to save her."
- Which sounds very self sacrificial
- And yet that same guy won't pick up his underwear or do the dishes or the many other things his wife asks
 - That's sacrificial living in an everyday sense, and it's the one that truly matters for our testimony
 - Regardless of how godly or respectful our wives may be, we are called to sacrifice continually for her as a testimony of what Christ did for the church
 - It's the way a husband is called to show submission, first to Christ and secondly to his wife's needs
- This is a real stumbling block for many Christian husbands
 - Men who think leadership is being a tough guy or a good provider or a doting father
 - Those things may be helpful and even preferable at times, but they are not loving your wife as Christ loved the church
 - They are loving yourself first and then loving your wife as it suits you
- Paul says we ought to love our wives as much as we love our own bodies
 - When he says our body, Paul means all that we desire for ourselves
 - Usually, men are thinking about what pleases us, that is our body
 - But Paul says husbands ought to strive to love their wives as they would their own bodies
 - Which means we stop asking what we like and start asking what our wives would like in all areas of life

- In v.29 Paul says the husband who cares more for his wife's needs over his own is nourishing his own flesh, loving himself in better ways
 - He's speaking both in practical and spiritual terms
 - First, practically speaking, a husband who sacrifices for his wife in everyday ways sets the conditions for greater love in his marriage
 - He will see fruit in his relationship with his wife as she takes note of his sacrificial leadership in the home for her sake
 - Over time, her appreciation for his selflessness will increase her love for him
 - Her joy in him will leave him finding greater satisfaction in her
 - Ironically, a selfish husband who lives only for himself finds less happiness and contentment in his marriage
 - His relationship with his wife becomes a contest of wills, a scramble for resources and source of constant conflict
 - The more a husband seeks for himself over his wife, the unhappier and unhealthy his marriage will be
 - And as a wiseman once said, "If mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy"
 - So husbands, if you truly want to love yourself more, begin by loving your better half first
- More importantly, a husband who loves his wife in this way gains spiritually
 - Paul says Christ cherished us because we are His Body corporately
 - It was in Christ's own best interests that He cared for us, to strengthen us and make us into His image
 - Because the Church will be a product of His sacrificial work
 - So in that sense, we reflect His own glory back upon Himself
 - Had Christ neglected His Church, then He would only be robbing Himself of glory in the end
 - Likewise, Paul says a husband who nurtures his wife through sacrificial living will achieve greater glory for himself in eternity

- The key to understanding this point is to remember that your believing wife is your sister in the Lord
- Long after you are no longer married to each other, you will still be brothers and sisters in the body of Christ
- And that eternal relationship is more important than your marriage relationship
 - How a husband lives with his wife has eternal implications for both of them
 - The husband is comparable to Christ, we are the ones in leadership position in the family
 - As we serve her in marriage we are in a position to influence her sanctification for better or worse
 - And since you're both part of the body of Christ, Paul says you are impacting the sanctification of your own body
- Peter says it this way:

1Pet. 3:7 You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

- Peter says we are to live with our wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker
- Peter means weaker in the sense of someone with less power in the marriage, someone under our authority
- As a leader, you should understand that your decisions impact the spiritual walk of those under your care
- So Peter says show her honor – not as a wife – but as a fellow heir of grace
 - Think about how your relationship will be reflected in your testimony in the coming Kingdom
 - Will you be known as a husband who furthered your wife's walk with the Lord or detracted from it

- If you hold your wife in contempt or take advantage of her or abuse her or fail to lead her into godliness, Peter says you are hindering your own prayers
 - You are working against your own best interests where God is concerned
 - While you seek the Lord's favor in your prayers, you are distancing yourself from him in your conduct
- But when a husband and wife live according to scripture, three good things happen
 - First, both become a perfect compliment to the other in marriage
 - The wife respects her husband's authority, offering her counsel while honoring his opinions and submitting to his decisions
 - While the husband seeks what's best for his wife, sacrificing his own desires for her sake, and enabling her to become more holy
 - Both picturing the relationship that exists between the Church and Her Groom, Christ
 - Secondly, when husbands and wives in the Church play their assigned roles, we get more sanctified followers of Christ
 - A wife who encourages her husband's leadership and respects his authority is likely to get a more godly husband
 - A husband who encourages his wife's submission to his authority by living self-sacrificially putting her needs first is likely to get a more godly wife
 - Each one working for the needs of the other so that both are encouraged to obey the Lord more so that both are sanctified
 - In the end, each lives as holy a life as possible, arriving before the judgment seat of Christ with the best possible testimony
 - Finally, and most importantly, a godly marriage serves its missional purpose of reflecting Christ to the world, as Paul explains:

[Eph. 5:31](#) for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

[Eph. 5:32](#) This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

[Eph. 5:33](#) Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

- You may remember in the Garden that God said it was not good for man to be alone
 - The Lord meant that it would not be good for Adam after the Fall to live in a world of sin on his own
 - He needed a partner, a wife to help Adam fight the enemy and his flesh
 - She would encourage him to greater obedience and support him in his walk of faith
 - Likewise, Adam would lead her in the same way
 - In quoting from Genesis 2, Paul reveals this New Testament mystery
 - That God intended the union of man and wife to be a picture of the union of the Church with Christ
 - We've been speaking of this picture throughout today's teaching, but we only know of it because Paul revealed it here
 - So the Christian's mission in marriage is to show the world the Church's relationship to Christ
 - This picture works both ways
 - The world can learn about Christ's relationship with the Church by observing a godly husband's relationship with his wife
 - Likewise, the world can learn about godly marriage by observing the Church's relationship with Christ
 - When marriage in the Church operates properly in this way, you see a beautiful reflection of Christ and the Church
 - That's a missional focus on marriage
 - Where our goal is happiness through holiness
 - So that we may proclaim a Savior Who died to make us holy