

Marriage (1)

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[0:00] Father God, we thank you for your unchanging, unwavering, constant, never-ending, all-encompassing love for your people.

! Thank you that you love us as your children as we're gathered here before you now. And so we come to you, our loving God, our Heavenly Father.

We come and we bow before our glorious King Jesus and we pray that your Spirit would work in us through your Word and grant that we might put our trust in you again.

And in putting our trust in you that we might humbly and completely obey you. We thank you, Lord, that your Word has power to encourage us and edify us, to instruct us, but also to correct us and even rebuke us.

But Lord, we know it is all for our good and your glory. So have your way among us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. As we look at this passage, I'll be preaching here for this morning and next week.

[1:20] And so this morning's message is kind of in two parts, okay? So you get in part one today. And that being the case, it will be a bit lighter on application, though there will be application throughout.

And there'll be more application next week, okay? That's the first thing to say. Here's another general statement to make, an observation, but a really important one that comes in this passage is in verse 32.

In all that Paul is saying, speaking about husbands and wives and marriage, he says, this is a profound mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the church, which is a strange thing to say, isn't it?

But basically what he's saying, as he addresses wives and husbands, the question of marriage, right at the fore of his mind is the relationship between Christ and the church.

And everything that he has to say about marriage and about husbands and wives has everything to do with Christ and the church. And that means that everything we all read here is relevant for every single one of us because we're all part of the church, right?

[2:36] And so there's immediate relevance for us all in all of this. And hopefully some of that will become clear. And then the other observation that I want to make, in fact we're going to, we really expound this a little bit, is verse 21.

Verse 21, Paul writes, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Now, that command comes kind of at the end of the previous four and a half, five and a half chapters of theology. Paul has been teaching all about, you know, amazing things about the church and about Christ and things we're going to look at in a few moments. But it's like everything that he's been saying about God and the church and what God is doing and how the church fits in with that and how we fit in with the church.

All that he's been saying about all of that comes to, is a weight that comes to bear on what he says in everything that follows. And we're kind of jumping in without having looked at all of that.

And that's a dangerous thing to do. The dangerous thing is this. We kind of think, and we tend towards doing this, don't we, very easily, or some of us do at least. Thinking, look, I'm not really too interested in theology, just tell me what to do.

[3:59] You know, tell me what to do and I'll go and do it. We love often very practical messages that tell us what to do because we just want to know what to do. But, you know, it says here, doesn't it, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

So if we try and submit to one another and do all of this, if it's not coming out of our reverence for Christ, it's not the kind of submission really that Paul is exhorting us to.

So I'm going to begin by thinking about our reverence for Christ before we even think about submitting to one another. You know, by the time, you know, as Paul writes, by the time we get here, we're meant to, you know, our jaws should be dropped at the wonder and glory of what has been revealed to us in Ephesians.

You know, right from the beginning, chapter one, what Paul begins to do, he begins to unpack God's overarching plan, beginning from the, before the beginning of time, you know, right stretching all the way into eternity.

He makes it clear, this amazing God of ours has an overarching, massive, mega plan. God is on a mission to fulfil his plan.

[5:24] And it's a plan that involves us. We get caught up in this amazing plan that God is working out. And it's a plan that involves us, it's a plan that involves every believer.

And Paul shows us in this plan what God has done for us in order to fulfil his plan. And he kind of begins, doesn't he, in chapter one by summing it up by telling us that, he says, you have been blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing.

And it's so easy for us to underestimate just how good that is, right? I mean, here's a way of just beginning to understand what that means, right? Had he said, you are blessed with every, that's every, earthly blessing, every conceivable earthly blessing.

Imagine how blessed you would be. Think about that. If you were blessed with every earthly blessing. I mean, you would be just walking on air your whole life.

Full of praise. And you'd just be, you know, absolutely amazed your whole life. Just how, how rich and how blessed you are. We haven't been blessed with every earthly blessing.

[6:49] We all know that. But we have been blessed with something even greater. Every blessing. Every heavenly blessing. And, you know, what we're going to do is we're going to just think very briefly, really, about why we should revere this one.

The one that has blessed us in the heavenly realms of every blessing. The one that has this amazing plan that he has planned before the beginning of time that he will bring to fruition at the end of time when he returns.

Why we should revere this one who has adopted us as children and given us his spirit and given us an eternity and an inheritance. Who gives us daily strength. Why we should revere this one.

We're going to think about some reasons. Not looking at Ephesians though. Just thinking a little bit about Jesus' earthly ministry. We revere him because of his glory, right? And in John 17, Jesus prays.

He says, Father, glorify your son with the glory I had with you before the foundation of the world. He says, I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work that you gave me to do. So why do we revere Jesus?

[7:57] Well, when we look at his earthly ministry, we see something of his glory. And we should revere him. What do we see? Well, we see, for example, the demonstration of his kingdom.

And he feeds the 5,000 from a couple of bits of bread. And that tells us, it's like Jesus is saying, in my kingdom, no one will be in me.

There will be abundance for all. There will be no hunger. No one scrimping and scraping. He is the ability and power and will to provide richly for everyone.

He healed the sick, didn't he? Every single sick person that came to him, he healed them all. And he showed us in that, that in his kingdom that's coming, in that kingdom, he will eradicate all sickness, disease, infirmity, every ailment, it will all be gone.

He has the, this is the kind of king that he showed himself to be. And he cast out demons, didn't he? And showed that he has all authority and power over evil.

[9:08] In his kingdom, evil will no longer have any place. It does in this world. But then, it will not. He confounded by his wisdom, the religious leaders of his day, and showed his wisdom in that.

He raised the dead. And showed he has power even over death. And he forgave sins.

And in these things, he demonstrated the glory of his kingdom to come and his own glory and power. But it says in John 17, he says, Now glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the foundations of the world.

So in other words, in all the glory that he revealed in his ministry, which tells us about this amazing kingdom to come, that does not sufficiently reveal his glory. He's much greater, far more glorious than that.

Well, the next thing that happened is he crosses the Kidron Valley, is in Gethsemane, and we know how the story unfolds from there. And let's just think for a moment about just a couple of things, why we should revere him.

[10:21] After, you know, the one time we see Jesus undone, the only time, and he seems to lose all composure, is in Gethsemane, isn't it? Yeah, where he's on his knees before his father, overwhelmed with anguish.

Never see him like that anywhere else. That's at the prospect of the cross. But he comes to terms with it, he's strengthened, and he fights that battle.

And then we read how the soldiers and the religious leaders were coming for him. Now there he is in Gethsemane. He knows what they're going to do.

What would you do? I would turn tail and I would run in the opposite direction. It says, he went out to meet them.

What an amazing, just that, isn't that just amazing? He went out to meet them, knowing all that was going to happen. And then, he speaks to them.

[11:21] He addresses them. What do you want? And they answer. We've come for Jesus of Nazareth. And Jesus says, I am he.

And what do we read next? They drew back and fell to the ground. Just think of, I mean, when we get to Gloria, I hope we can sort of rewind back in time and watch this.

I mean, imagine that. They fell back to the ground. All he said of us, I am he. I don't know exactly what was going on, but here's how I kind of read that. I don't think it's too far-fetched or an exaggeration to say that.

At that time, the powers of darkness, all the demons, they must have been gathered in that place. You know, you'd have wanted a front seat if you was, you know, one of the demons at that time.

And they were, no doubt, you know, propelling, compelling the religious leaders in the evil that they were doing.

[12:21] And when they were confronted by Jesus and he says, I am he, it seems to me that they just lose their nerve completely. And, you know, all the soldiers, there they are.

They fall back on the ground. What are we doing here? And they're in a right old state. And Jesus says to them, what do you want? And, because, you know, he's already told them he is, you know, who he is.

And what do you want? He asks them again. And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. And then what he does is he sets the terms and conditions for them. I told you I am he.

And he tells them that they're to leave his people, the disciples. Sets the terms and conditions. And then they take him. Only then. In the Gospel of Luke, we read of Judas Iscariot, he betrays them with kings.

What does Jesus say? This is your hour when darkness reigns. That's what Jesus said. And when he said those words, knowing what would happen, he was giving himself over to the powers of darkness.

[13:36] Surrendering himself completely. You know, Job, Satan had to get permission, didn't he? To inflict on injury and to afflict Job.

And it was the same with Jesus. Satan needed permission. And Jesus gave it. And then, we know what that led to, his death on the cross.

And on the cross, we see Jesus stripped, naked, beaten, bloodied, humiliated.

And the Bible tells us he didn't open his mouth. He didn't retaliate. What was he doing?

Here's the picture. He surrenders himself and becomes as weak as he possibly, possibly can be.

[14:39] He could not be any weaker. And the powers of darkness and the wickedness of men gleefully do their worst.

And what happens? In his utter weakness, he defeats all the powers of darkness.

He defeats death, the last enemy, and he breaks the power of sin. In his weakness. Isn't that amazing? And so, what we have displayed at the cross is the power of God.

Because if that's him in his weakness, what about when he returns in power? No wonder we're to eagerly anticipate his return, right? You think about it.

When he comes back, how great is that going to be? All the haters, all the people that say, oh, there's no God, all the people that have no reverence, no honour, that treat him as if he's nothing, that treat the church as if it's nothing.

[15:43] Just think, on that day, when he returns in power, every mouth will be silenced. Submit to one another out of reverence for him.

Him. Him. I was thinking just how to illustrate this. And I couldn't really think of a good illustration. You know when there's thunder and lightning.

It's like, if you think of that as a bit like God. And then what happens is, lightning strikes. I know that this is a negative kind of illustration. And I don't mean it to be negative, just to illustrate a particular point.

But lightning strikes out of all that thunder and lightning. You can imagine the sky lighting up. Crack of lightning comes down. Why? Well, it meets with a kind of a conductor, doesn't it?

A receptor. There's something that connects what's happening up there with planet Earth. And, you know, in the church, we are like receptors.

[16:47] It's like all that God is doing up there, it finds its grounding in the church. All of his power comes from him and connects in and through us.

When does it do that? As we submit to one another. It's in this submitting to one another. Because Paul has been talking all about the church, all about God, all about how God is at work.

And the church is the locus, the location as it were, of God's kingdom on Earth. At least the primary location. Where we see God's kingdom and his power and his rule worked out.

And how is it worked out? How does his power work out in the church in a way that glorifies him as we submit to one another?

Isn't that an amazing thing? It comes just down to that simple thing. So we're to submit to one another. And all of this, all of what we read is out of reverence for Christ.

[17:50] We're to submit to one another. So here's the question. Like I said, there's not going to be a lot of application. But here's a question for you. Who are you submitting to?

Where are you submitting at the moment? Are you in submission at the moment? Yeah, because this is what we're meant to be doing, submitting to one another. It's a good question to ask, isn't it? Who are you serving? That is a good question. Because that involves submission, doesn't it? Submitting. Notice Paul doesn't say that we should have attitudes of submissiveness towards one another.

He doesn't say that. He says submit to one another. Do it. It's something for us all to do and be doing. So it's like, as you sort of think about the church, think about your brothers and sisters, how can I submit and support and serve?

Good question for us. Okay, but then he gets into husbands and wives. And this is where our main focus is. Now here's another observation.

[18:50] Okay, two things, right? First, he addresses wives first, doesn't he? And then husbands. You might have expected him to address husbands first, really. And then wives. But he doesn't. He addresses wives first and then husbands.

Now here's the obvious thing as you look at it. There are two verses for wives and then the rest is for husbands. So more on husbands, less on wives. But here's the other thing.

When he addresses wives, he's kind of addressing husbands. We'll see why. Let's have a look at it. Okay? Just bear in mind that observation. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.

For the husband is the head of the wife. Now here's where he's addressing husbands. He's like, this is being read to the church. And everyone in the church needs to know this.

Wives are to submit to their husbands. For the husband, husbands, are you listening? That's kind of what Paul is saying. So even as he's addressing wives.

[19:51] Husbands. The husband is the head of the wife. As Christ is the head of the church. So even as he addresses the wives, he's addressing husbands.

But here's what we can often do and what husbands like to do. Let me say it like this. In addressing wives. Really we can dispense with a lot of the sort of more complicated stuff.

And focus just on one verse or one thought. And that is wives submit to your husbands. In fact, some of us husbands might say, look. You know, let's just take verse 24.

Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. And some of our husbands we might think, look wife. You don't really need to worry about the Bible. You don't really need to worry about anything. Just memorise this one verse. That's all you need to do. Memorise this one verse. As the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

[20:55] In fact, don't worry about the first part. Just that second part. Submit to your husbands in everything. And we do hear a fair bit about that.

And one of our responses is to kind of equivocate on that. Yeah, because it says wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

It doesn't say wives should submit to their husbands when their husbands are godly. It doesn't say that, does it? It doesn't say wives should submit to their husbands when they're inclined to do so.

And it doesn't say all sorts of qualifications we can put on it. It doesn't say that, does it? It just says, it says wives should submit to their husbands in everything. That is what it says.

But the thing is this. There is co-text to this. In other words, it says that. And if that's all the Bible said, fair enough.

[21:52] But it's not, is it? Yeah, thank goodness that's not the case, right? What does he say? Let's just go back to verse 22.

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. And then he gives the ground, the foundation for his saying what he says.

In other words, he says that based on the foundation that he sets out that follows. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, his body of which he is the saviour.

Now here's what Paul is saying there. And this is really so important. And even as I was preparing, I found it really helpful. What he's saying there is, wives submit to their husbands because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.

Okay, he draws parallels, yeah? Husband, Christ, wife, church. Husband, head of wife. Christ, head of the church. The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.

[23:10] In other words, we take our cues from Christ and the church. The husband is supposed to be the head of his wife in the way that Christ is the head of the church.

And it's in that context that a wife is to submit to her husband. It doesn't say, you know, so in other words, you know, it doesn't say that wives is to submit to their, just to submit to their husbands.

It doesn't say that. It puts a qualification on it. As the husband, as the church submits to Christ. The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.

Now, if the husband is not the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, if he's the head of the wife in other ways, and there's all sorts of ways that a husband can, you know, attempt to be the head of his wife, isn't there?

Loads of ways that are nothing like Christ's headship over the church. And if that's the case, that's not the kind of headship that the wife is being called to submit to in everything.

[24:23] In fact, the husband who assumes headship over his wife for his own personal benefit, in a controlling kind of way, in an abusive way, who wants to use it to keep his wife in her place, and all that kind of stuff, is so dishonouring the Lord Jesus.

It is an affront when we husbands use something like this to try and control our wives, because that is not as Christ is the head of the church.

He's just not like that, is he? In fact, here's what we do, right? We take all that Paul says to wives, often what us husbands can do, and all that he says to husbands, and we take its kind of main

emphasis and flip it on its head.

Paul gives one emphasis, we flip it on its head and get it completely the wrong way around. So here's how it can play out. We say to the wives, wives, submit to your husbands, it says, you know, in everything, because the husband is the head of the wife, as the Christ is the head of the church, and the wife says, yeah, well, what if he's a bad husband?

What if this, what if that? And we're like, no, well, your business is just whatever. You should submit to him whatever. Yeah, that's your business. And if he's a bad husband, that's his bad. Often that's how it gets played out.

[25:48] But still wives, and the emphasis is so often on you wives submitting to your husbands, right? But that is not Paul's emphasis. Think about it.

How does the church submit to Christ? Well, here's how we would hope. Joyfully, willingly, in an honourable, loving way.

And so there's a good aim for us, right? But how does the church really submit to Christ? Look at the church the world over. It's a mess, isn't it? If we're honest.

Now, there's the ideal, but the church is pretty much quite a mess, really. It's a messy affair. We all know that. And so wives reflect something of the church.

There's an ideal, but we're all a bit of a mess. But look at Christ. The church, it gets its submission to Christ wrong often.

[26:50] It makes a mess of it often. It struggles with it, just as wives do. But here's the question. How often does Christ get his headship wrong with the church?

Never. How often does he compromise on his responsibilities? Never. In what Paul is saying, the standard for the husband is so much higher, as it were.

Because your husband, you're meant to be like Christ. I mean, that is a challenge. And that's the husband that the wife is to submit to.

That kind of, a godly husband. Well, we need to speed on very quickly as we address husbands. Now, there's, with every verse, pretty much, what Paul does, is he does say to wives, by the way, submit to your husbands and everything.

And this is like, you've got a godly husband, okay? If you haven't, it's a different story. But assuming you've got a husband that wants, that puts God first, that is seeking to be Christ-like, as a husband to his wife, then Paul says, submit to him in everything.

[28:11] In everything. Don't fight that husband. Don't make his job harder. Don't be difficult. Submit to him in everything.

But what he then does with the husband, the wife is to submit to husband in everything, but the husband, the scope of his authority, with everything that Paul says, it gets more and more narrow. In other words, although the wife is to submit to husband in everything, the husband is given authority in actually quite a narrow, it has a wide impact, but a narrow sphere.

Look at what he says. Husbands, love your wives, not just love them, just as Christ loved the church. So, it's not any old love, it's narrowed it to the way that Christ loves the church.

But then he adds, that's not all that it says. And, love the church, and, gave himself up for her. That's, that's, that's narrowed it a bit more, isn't it?

[29:14] If we take just that first bit, it's just as Christ loved the church, but then the, the focus, is the emphasis, narrows it to, and gave himself up for her.

And that means, husbands, your, headship is, and your authority, is one of, sacrifice. sacrifice. Giving yourself up.

Yeah, we're all to die to ourself, but for marriage to work, the husband has to die to himself.

Because none of it will work, if he doesn't, or none of it will work as God intends.

Gave himself up for her. But then it's narrowed even more. Gave himself up for her, with an aim.

What is it? To make her holy.

To make her holy. What does that mean? It means, to be set apart for God. His, the, the authority of a husband, primarily is one of sacrifice, in order, that his wife, may more and more, be devoted, to Christ.

[30:33] Christ. That more and more of her life, is given over to him. I know there's a lot more to be said, but there's not, enough time to say all that, needs to be said.

But let's just go a bit further. Gave himself up to her, to make her holy, cleansing, her, by the washing, with water, through the word.

and to present her to himself, as a radiant church. So he's, like Christ, we are, husbands are to be ministers, of God's word.

Words of encouragement. Words of wisdom. Reminding the wife, when she sins, that she has, forgiveness, as she repents.

You know, the assurance, that comes from God's word. Husbands are to use, God's word, to encourage, build up, edify, nourish, their wives, just as Christ does.

[31:33] And verse 27, is the end game. And to present her to himself, as a radiant church, without stain, or wrinkle, or any other blemish, but holy, and blameless.

What Paul is saying there, to all husbands, is this. You are not responsible, for the wife that you get. Okay? When you marry your wife, you're not responsible, for the way that she is then.

But at the end of your marriage, your wife should be more beautiful, more radiant, more godly. And you are responsible, for that.

Or you have a responsibility, in that. That's what Paul is saying. Those of you that have been married, for any period of time, I hope you look at your wives, and think, you are more beautiful, and godly, and pure, and holy.

You know, when I look back, at your life, there's never been a time, when you've loved the Lord more. That, is a sign, of a good husband. One that, seeks to, encourage his wife, in godliness, and holiness, and devotion.

[32:41] The word husband, I'll finish with this, because we're going to be, we'll think more, next week. But the word husband, you know what it means, don't you? It's a gardener, isn't it? Husbandry.

And it's a good picture for us, because what does a husband, in terms, as a gardener do? Well, he nourishes the soil, he, he adds nutrients to it, doesn't he?

He plants seeds, he waters it, he cares for it, and what's he looking for? Fruit. A fruitful wife. And I'm talking about the fruit of the spirit.

So, yes, husbands are head, are the head of their wife, but not just, as Christ, is the head of the church, there's a particular purpose, in it.

And wives, are to submit, to their husbands, in everything. In other words, as your husband, seeks to love you, and nourish, and nurture, and encourage.

[33:51] Don't resist him. Don't make it difficult. Last verse. However, each one of you, must also love his wife, as he loves himself, and the wife, must respect her husband.

Remember it begun, didn't it? Submit to one another, out of reverence for Christ. That's where, Paul began the whole submission, thing, right? And he finishes by saying, a husband is to love, his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect, her husband.

Why would the wife, respect her husband? Well, because he's respectful, right? Hopefully, he's the kind of husband, that she would joyfully respect, because he loves her.

As, you know, why do we, revere Christ? Because of who he is, and because of all that he's done, because of all that he's doing. Why should our wives respect husbands?

Hopefully, because of who they are, because of all that they've done, all that they're doing. we'll come to more application next week.

[35:06] Let's close in prayer.