

## Submission and Sacrifice II – *Ephesians 5:25-30*

**Introduction** – When a sermon for and about husbands is about to be preached, the men who think they already know it all – don't know anything. Men who hear that a sermon for and about husbands is about to be preached and come wanting the Word to be broken open for them again – these men know about grace and they know something about the ongoing work of Christ for them, something they are to imitate with respect to their wives.

This passage has been preached before. What may be different this time is that we are coming at these verses with far more context, the whole of the book of Ephesians, and especially 5:17ff. And so, first of all, the powerful, loving, redeeming work of Christ for His church, and second of all, Spirit-filling, are absolutely essential to the Christian marriage. And this second aspect means that husbands are *not* commanded to love their wives; they are commanded, *filled with music, thanksgiving, and mutual deference*, to love their wives. This is not an insignificant difference.

**Love that Gives** (vv25-27) – In order to be a husband who pleases the Lord, a man has to be well versed in the deep things of Christ's atoning work, His sacrificial love. This theology must work its way down deep into our bones (which is the work of the Holy Spirit). God so loved that He gave (John 3:16). Christ was appalled at the prospect of becoming a curse by taking upon Himself the sins of His chosen (John 12:27, 2 Cor 5:21) but this was the way of our redemption (Gal 3:13) and so He also did it with great joy (Heb 12:2).

**Covenant Love** – How does this work though? How does an innocent man's death in Palestine pay for my sins? The answer is the covenant union that we enjoy in Jesus Christ, our new and final Adam (Gal 2:20). A husband is told to love His wife in a similar covenant union as a similar covenant head. Before a man marries a woman, he may have eros-love towards her, and he may enjoy philos-love at some level. And while we are all called to have agape-love towards one another, the agape-love that comes in the context of the covenant cannot happen until the day he marries her. This love is manifested by a vow to give and to die for; agape-love declared on the day of one's wedding is a vow of unilateral, sacrificial, self-denying and responsibility-taking love.

**Efficacious and Incarnational Love** – The marriage relationship is a real-time picture of the Gospel. It is so much so that Paul describes what Christ did for His church, what He accomplished for His bride, and then tells husbands to go and do likewise. There lurks the promise of sanctifying love (by means of a Word-saturated ministry) and a charge for earthy-love that works itself out far differently than mere sentimentalism. Christ does things for His bride; He does them out of love for her; He does them regardless of how much she notices, how thankful she is, or how quickly she responds. And He does so in a way that she does respond. He will have a glorious church – that is what agape love does. Men, if you do not know how to love your wife that way (and we all fall short) – study Jesus Christ.

**Reformed Marriages** – Men who boast in their "reformed theology" and have lousy marriages do not understand the books they read or the doctrines they tout. A home where definite atonement is both preached and lived out ought to be a home where the loveliness of Calvinism is revealed to all in a beautiful marriage. This is your first place to proclaim the gospel to the world: love your wife as Christ loved the church. *Sola Gratia* – grace alone: she doesn't earn your love; it is poured out upon her without merit. And she knows it, experiences it, and exults in it. She is your glory – and so for the joy set before you, *"husbands love your wives."*

**A Selfish but Holy Love** (vv28-30) – Still comparing the relationship of husband and wife to Christ, Paul changes the metaphor to Christ and His body. Remember, Christ was made head of all things for the sake of the church (Eph 1:22-23), *"which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."* This Head gave all He had for the sake of the church because it is His body. We do the same things with our own physical bodies – our head is constantly listening and making decisions for its body. We *"nourish and cherish (keep warm)"* our own bodies. This is why you cannot out-love your wife, for *"he who loves his wife loves himself."* Quit the competition; you are on the same team.

**(Side note 1** – Wives are instructed to submit to their husbands, but does this mean they cannot complain to their husbands? Our bodies complain to our head rightly when something is wrong. So wives are instructed from the Psalms on how to respectfully but passionately complain to their head).

**(Side note 2** – if we do not receive messages or ignore messages from our body, something is wrong or will soon become wrong. Can you feel your leg or has it fallen asleep?).

**Ephesian Husbands Are Just Like Us** – To every husband this command is given. Just like us, the Ephesian men battled with busy schedules, bills to pay, and the constant thorns of our labors in this fallen world. They struggled with anger, lust, contentment, entanglements with the world, just like us. Like us, they were sinners called to be saints. The gospel, the Spirit, had grabbed them and they were told to manifest that gospel and overflow in that Spirit in how they lived with their wives – in the kitchen, in the living room, in the marketplace, in the bedroom – everywhere. The gospel was to be incarnate in how husbands lived. It is the same today. It is the same for you.