

Submission and Sacrifice III – *Ephesians 5:31-33*

Introduction – Every marriage reflects a theology and preaches a gospel. Godly submission and sacrificial headship preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. What gospel are our marriages preaching?

One Flesh (vv31-32) – Paul's first reason for quoting this verse (Gen 2:24) is to reinforce the point he was making that husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He already was saying that this was analogous to our own physical bodies (v29a), and to Christ's relationship to the church, which is His body (v29b-30). And so a verse which at first glance was speaking of the glorious gift of marriage we find, mysteriously, is also speaking (and probably even speaking more) of Christ and the church.

Understand the Analogy Rightly – "One flesh" is not limited to the sexual union of a husband and wife, but it does include that and even begins there. Human marriage is a sexual union between a man and a woman protected by covenant vows of faithfulness before God and society. But the analogy is not between a human marriage and your personal relationship with Jesus; rather it is the union of Christ to the whole church. Jesus is not your personal Boyfriend, which has led to several weird overly-sentimental and romantic notions about our union with Christ. As individuals, God is our Father and Christ is our Elder Brother, our Lord and Savior, our Good Shepherd and Friend. If we get this theology/analogy mixed up, the picture makes Jesus look like a polygamist, which He is not.

The Non-cultural Roles of Husband and Wife (v33) – Practically summarizing vv22ff, Paul again commands husbands and wives according to their particular roles in the marriage relationship. He does not tie those roles to Greco-Roman culture (which wouldn't work anyway), nor to Hebrew traditions (or "traditional family values"). He ties the commands to the creation order.

Distinct Roles While Being "One Flesh" – God instituted marriage; it was His idea. Having instructed Adam to subdue the earth and fill it (Gen 1:27-28), He instituted marriage and family as the means for this to take place, declaring that it was not good for man to be alone (Gen 2:18). Adam's helper must also bear God's image, and so none of the animals could qualify. Having shown Adam this, God decided to take Adam's body, divide it into two in such a way as to then bring back together into one; and He did so via a death and resurrection act (Gen 2:21-22). Thus the mystery of the Gospel was imbedded in the marriage relationship. But this also means that a husband loves his body when he loves his wife and a wife respects her own head when she respects her husband. And so, *"Nevertheless..."* (v33).

Implications – While all of what follows is not immediately found in vv31-33, it certainly follows. If Paul is commanding Jew and Gentile Christians to live in family relationships based upon Genesis 1-2, then all of that instruction applies to us and our culture today.

It Is Not Good for Man to Be Alone – This never means that widows or singles for any of a number of reasons are in sin (there are lots of biblical and good reasons and circumstances to be single). It does mean that the paradigm for a godly culture should be a norm of the building of families in the context of monogamous marriages. Our current culture is seeing a higher and higher average age of getting married and a higher and higher percentage of unmarried people. What does this tell us about our culture?

Definitions – If God instituted marriage, then only God can define it. And He has defined it as a sexual union between one man and one woman, for life, except for sexual immorality. We are shocked at homosexual unions being assigned the status of "marriage" today; but look at what we have allowed against God's law for decades?

The Twist of the Fall – The biblical roles of husband and wife existed prior to the Fall which is why Gen 2:24 can be naturally inserted into this section of Ephesians. But, when Adam fell, it affected his relationship with God, with his wife, and with creation. Eve was told that *"your desire shall be for your husband and he will rule over you"* (Gen 3:16). This *"desire"* is not a hope for a sweet, perfect relationship with one's husband no matter the cost, which some feminists purport; the other use of this word in Gen 4:7 makes this clear. It is a *"desire"* to usurp his headship and to wrongly dominate. The marriage relationship was going to be tough.

Evangelism by Means of Marriage – The Gospel is the answer for the world. Yet isn't it interesting that nowhere in Ephesians is the church commanded to go out and "share the gospel" in the way we think of. This is no charge against evangelizing; it is a command to make sure your life imitates what you preach (is your marriage *"salty"* *a la* Matt 5:13). And it is encouragement to all that faithful marriages (and by that I mean faithful, imperfect marriages) declare and even provide the cultural glue for declaring the message of the Gospel. Biblical submission and sacrificial headship preach Jesus.

Nevertheless... - Returning and ending with v33. All of this instruction declares that husbands and wives, by the God-ordained stations they have been placed, will have an inescapable impact on the building of a culture – beginning with their own children. Bitter, disrespectful and unsubmitive wives will produce a particular kind of church and culture. Abusive and angry husbands will destroy a grace-saturated, joyful and hopeful kingdom. But you have been brought out of such death-dealing natures. If you are in Christ, you have been granted new life in Jesus Christ. You have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and are able to be filled by Him with His Word and grace to, out of His overflowing life, be changed and be conduits of radical resurrection, reformation, revival and renewal in your cultures, your homes, and throughout the world to the glory of the name of Jesus Christ. Receive this grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9) today.