

Biblical Headship and Related Blessings – Eph 5:23

The Glorious Mystery that is Marriage IX

Introduction – Just as we need to understand that unbiblical views of headship proclaim heresies about God (last week's sermon), so we need to understand that biblical views of headship proclaim the truth about God. But holding to these truths is not all God would have us do. He would have us submit to His truth with a view to the blessings – the way of life, the way of plenty, the way of victory, the way of love.

Watch Your Grammar (Eph 5:23) – Every time there is a marriage; the husband becomes the head of his wife. The text does not command husbands to *choose* to be the head; the husband *is* the head. This is not a command; this is a statement of fact. And the *"as also"* part tells us that husbands are speaking about Christ and about His gospel all day long, every day. The question is never whether or not he is the head. The question is always whether or not he is being an obedient head or a disobedient head. And this verse also teaches us that we learn about headship in marriage by looking to the ultimate and final marriage – the headship of Christ to His bride.

The Fullness of Headship – *"And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all"* (Eph 1:22-23). This earlier passage in Ephesians speaks of Christ's headship over His body and Paul picks up on this language in 5:23. Because we live in a world made by the triune God, fullness in one place does not mean emptiness in another place. More "here" does not mean less "there." In these verses we see that the Father gives the Son all things, filling Him. The Son is filled by having been given all, and the Son is the One who fills all. Biblical headship bestows fullness to its body and the full body fills the head. This is the mutual indwelling of head and body, of the husband and wife, of Christ and His bride, and of the persons of the Holy Trinity.

Bestowing Fullness – While there is mystery here, there is simple application to be found. How does a husband indwell his wife and a wife indwell her husband? *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another"* (John 13:34). This is not a command to send "love-vibes" to one another. This is command of mutual indwelling, bestowing and receiving fullness.

Bestowing Glory – This is related to another truth which does not make sense to carnal thinking. *"...the woman is the glory of the man"* (1 Cor 11:7). Proverbs tells us she is the crown of her husband. He bestows glory to her as her head, and she glorifies him by resting on his head. He bestows on her, she becomes lovelier, and his glory is revealed. This is the story of the gospel: We receive an inheritance in Christ (Eph 1:11) and this brings praise to His glory (1:12).

Sacrificial Love that is Headship – Right after telling us that Christ is the head of the church, we are told what this headship entails... *"and He is the Savior of the body."* Christ did not save the body by issuing decrees from His autonomous throne in heaven. He took on human flesh, dwelt with men, and humbled Himself for us, even to the point of death on a cross (Phil 2:5-9). And this is the first point of application for the husband who is the head: *"...love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her"* (v25). The head loves the body, because, by definition, the head loves his own body (vv28-29).

The Real Authority of Headship – There is true authority in the relationship of a husband and his wife (v24), and to the carnal, egalitarian mind, this is threatening. Even Jesus recognized and empathized with this fear, noting the almost automatic tendency to abuse authority (Matt 20:25-26). But Jesus did not say it was wrong to desire godly authority. Instead, He showed the servant's heart context of godly authority (Matt 20:27-28). Christ did not gain His authority simply by being the head. His authority flows from taking covenantal responsibility, representative responsibility, for His people. The first Adam looked at his sin and blamed it on his bride. The second Adam looked at the sin of His bride and took it upon Himself (2 Cor 5:21). This means that if your life is a wreck, if your home is a wreck, if your relationships in the family are a wreck, if your finances are a wreck, the buck stops with the husband. And the biblical head gladly takes the responsibility. Which Adam do you sound like when you speak with God?

The Covenantal Power of Headship – Being in covenant with your wife (just as Christ is in covenant with us) means that everything the head does is amplified. That is, the husband's obedience brings great blessing to all those in covenant with him. Your particular, incarnational, prayerful love for your wife will be efficacious (Eph 5:26-27). On the other hand, disobedience will bring curses upon those under your headship (Rom 5:14). Once again, how you act speaks about Christ all day long. What do you believe about Jesus Christ? What has He promised you?

Our "Everyday" Marriage – How does this work out in your mundane, humdrum, day-to-day life? You must remember that you are not doing it. God declares these things. Our job is to believe these things, to believe the gospel, to humble ourselves before God and let Him exalt us. Husbands: you will not understand *"the husband is head of the wife,"* until you truly believe, *"as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body."*