

The Redemption of Marriage

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[0 : 00] Apostle Paul writes, Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself, for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

[1 : 29] Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I'm saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Let's pray. Father, take your word now by your spirit.

Lord, open our eyes to see wonderful things in it, and change our hearts by it. It is in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. It's difficult to read the Bible without coming to the conclusion that marriage is very important to God.

So that the Bible begins in Genesis, in chapters 1 and 2, with the account of creation. The Bible begins with a marriage. Genesis chapter 2, the culmination of the creation story, is the marriage of Adam and Eve.

And so if you turn to Genesis chapter 2, you're welcome to do that if you want to. If you turn to Genesis chapter 2, at the end of it, in verses 24 and 25, we read this, Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother, and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

[2 : 44] And the man and his wife were both naked, and they were not ashamed. So the creation account itself ends and comes to a high point with the marriage of Adam and Eve, with the coming together of man and woman in this thing that we call marriage.

Eve is specifically called the wife of Adam there. It begins with marriage. Not only does the Bible begin with an emphasis on marriage, but the Bible ends with an emphasis on marriage.

Because if you turn to the other end of your Bible, to the book of Revelation, in Revelation chapter 21, we see not the marriage of a man and a woman, but we see the wedding feast of Christ and His bride, the church.

So that in verse 2 of Revelation 21, John says, I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband.

And then in verse 9, he says, Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me saying, Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

[3 : 53] So the Bible begins with a story that culminates in marriage and the Bible ends with a great wedding feast. Marriage is a big deal. It's important to God.

It's important to understanding the overarching story of Scripture. But we all know that something is wrong with marriage in the world today.

Not because it's all over the news and not because people are talking about all kinds of political issues. We know something's wrong with marriage because we see it in ourselves. We see it in our own marriages.

We see it in the marriages within our families. I don't have to read a list of statistics to you about divorce. You don't have to be divorced. You don't have to have experienced divorce or have people close to you who have experienced divorce, even though most of us do, to know that something is amiss with marriage in the world.

It is not as God intended it to be. Marriage is not functioning on the whole the way that God intended it to function as He created Adam and Eve to be married and coupled together in Genesis chapter 2.

[4 : 58] Something is wrong. And we all feel it. We feel it every time we get in an argument with our spouse. We feel it every time that we're frustrated with them. We feel it every time we get a call from a friend and they've separated from one another and we want to comfort them and we want to help them.

But in that moment, we know and we are confronted with the fact that something's not quite right. And in fact, that something that's not quite right goes all the way back to the beginning, to chapter 3 of the book of Genesis, and to the fall.

If you say, what's wrong with marriage? Many people will say to you, well, we don't communicate well enough. Well, we fight about finances too often. Or they'll just list all kinds of problems that they think are the issues with marriage.

And those are symptoms of the real problem. The real problem, as we see it in Genesis chapter 3, is that we are fallen people. We are sinners.

And in fact, if you read the account of Genesis chapter 3 very carefully, which we're not going to do this morning, we'll do it in later weeks, but if you read it very carefully, you'll see that one of the issues and one of the things that led to the fall and that led to Adam eating the fruit from the tree was an abandonment of God's created order.

[6 : 19] So God has a created order for marriage. We see it reflected in Ephesians 5, and we'll talk about this in the coming weeks. But He has a created order, and that created order includes the leadership of the men in the home.

Husbands lead their wives, whether we like it or not, or whether that fits with our culture or not. That's what the Scriptures say. And in Genesis chapter 3, we see a reversal of that. We see that the serpent approaches Eve and begins to question Eve about what God's command was, and yet Eve never received the command.

Adam received the command, and he had a duty as her husband to teach her the command of God, and to lead her into obedience to God's command. And yet, Adam stands by while Eve is deceived by the serpent.

And then Adam participates with Eve and follows Eve. In fact, God says to Adam, because you've listened to the voice of your wife, and men like to grab that and say, I don't have to listen to you anymore.

That's what messed Adam up. No, the point was, because you followed her rather than you leading her, then the ground is going to be cursed from that, and you, man, and all men after you will have to toil for all your days because you failed as a husband, Adam.

[7 : 33] It had consequences for all of humanity. In fact, the Apostle Paul even says in 1 Timothy chapter 2, he says that it was not Eve who was deceived, it was not Adam who was deceived, but Eve was deceived and ate of the fruit.

What's his point? Paul's not a chauvinist. His point is not that Eve was gullible and easily deceived. Paul's point is that, read Genesis 2 and 3 carefully. Eve wasn't given the command.

Adam was given the command. Adam knew. He knew the truth. And yet he stood by right there as the serpent deceived Eve.

And yet Adam was not deceived. Adam knew what was happening. Adam knew that the command of God was being subverted and he did nothing about it at all.

So the story of the fall of humankind begins with a reversal of God's ordained roles for men and women in the context of marriage.

[8 : 33] And so marriage from the very beginning is fraught with difficulties. In fact, God, as part of the curse, says to Eve that her desire will be for her husband, but he will rule over her.

In other words, from now on, because you have not only eaten from the fruit, but in doing that, you subverted the created order. From now on, your desire is going to be to go against the created order and the husband's desire is going to be not to lovingly rule you, not to lovingly lead you, but to rule over you.

So you're going to be at odds. Women are going to want to usurp the leadership of men and men are going to want to crush women and put them down and that's going, that's the way that things have worked.

You can look across the world and you can see that at work. You can see it at work even in Western civilizations like ours that have, on the whole, rejected male leadership and yet you still see that at work.

It's at work everywhere. So when you ask the question, what's wrong with marriage? You cannot say we don't communicate well enough because that's a symptom of the problem.

[9 : 44] You cannot say, well, we don't know well enough how to handle our finances and we argue about money. That's a symptom of the problem. The problem with our marriages is that we are sinful people.

That's the issue. So the solution to the problem of marriage is not a self-help course. It's not seven steps to better your married life.

The solution, the ultimate solution that will empower you to do all those little steps and to do, the thing that will empower you to do all of those things and to get all those other things right is redemption.

What we need is to be redeemed, not coached. And in fact, the reason that I began in Ephesians chapter 5, the reason that I began way back in verse 15 rather than verse 22 where marriage begins to be specifically addressed is because I've wanted you to see this larger context.

In fact, I think the Apostle Paul intends for us to read verses 22 through 33 in this larger context. Now, I'm saying that because of something that is not obvious in most of your English Bibles, but it's pretty obvious when you read it in the original language.

[10 : 58] I want you to take a look at verse 22 of Ephesians 5. Most of your translations say something like this, right? Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. All of them have the word submit or something like that, a verb in verse 22.

There is no verb in verse 22 at all. The translators are borrowing the verb from verse 21 because verse 22 is an application of verse 21.

The verb is in verse 21. It's submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, to your own husbands as to the Lord. So, in the context, what's happening here is Paul commands all of us to submit and then he gives three categories in which we submit.

Wives to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters. Or today, we wouldn't say slaves to masters. We would say employees to bosses would be the closest parallel that we have today. So, all of us are supposed to submit to different people in our lives and examples of the areas in which we're supposed to submit are wives are supposed to submit to husbands, children obey their parents and employees or slaves obey their masters or their bosses.

So, you see how that works out? So, this whole paragraph about marriage here that takes up all of these verses 22 through 33, it's fitted within the context of Paul discussing something broader and larger than that.

[12 : 23] So, what is he talking about? What is it that he's discussing? What does marriage fit within? Well, it fits within his discussion about spiritual growth and spiritual maturity.

Notice what he says in verses 15 through 18. He says, Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil.

He says, Therefore, do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is. And then in verse 18, and do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery but be filled with the Spirit. Can you see the three in each verse has a contrast?

So, that in verse 16 it says, not unwise but wise. Okay? In verse 17 it says, do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is.

And then in verse 18, don't get drunk but be filled with the Spirit. So, if you were to do this in two columns, okay, you would have wise, understand what the will of the Lord is, alright, and then finally be filled with the Spirit.

[13 : 30] Those are in the positive column. In the negative column you have unwise, foolish, and drunk with wine. Can you see how all those sort of fit together? Because if you're unwise, you are by definition foolish, right?

You guys okay with that? Agree? Alright. And if you get drunk with wine, well, you become a senseless person and you become for that period of time a foolish person doing foolish things.

So all of those things go together. They're all parallel which means that the three positive things are all parallel. You've got to be wise and to be wise you have to know what the Lord's will is and to know what the Lord's will is you have to be filled with the Spirit.

None of these things are possible. unless you have first been redeemed by Christ. Now if we were doing a study of the whole book of Ephesians, one of the things that I would point out to you is that the first three chapters of Ephesians are all about theology.

And Paul builds this great theology of salvation. And then chapters four, five, and six are all about applying that theology. So here in chapter five, we're in the middle of Paul's section where he's applying the theology that he has taught in the first three chapters of the book of Ephesians.

[14 : 45] So when Paul says that he wants you to be careful how you walk, he's referring back to things that he said previously. He's referring back to a way of life that you have. And the phrase that he uses is in Christ.

For Paul, you are either in Christ or you are outside of Christ. And to be in Christ is to have been saved, rescued, redeemed, and justified through faith in Jesus.

In fact, turn back to Ephesians chapter two, and I'll show you this where it's clearest. Ephesians chapter two, verse one, says that you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.

You see the same word, walked, that's where you used to walk, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

This is a contrast between where you used to walk and where you now walk in chapter five, and there's a contrast between the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience and you now being filled with the spirit of God.

[15 : 48] Here's the reason for the contrast. It's going to come in verse four, but verse three says, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

This makes the difference. This is the difference between walking in trespasses and walking in the Lord. But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved, and he raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

So you can't do chapter 5, alright? You can't watch carefully how you walk. You can't be wise in the biblical sense of wise. And you cannot be filled with the Spirit if you have not first been saved by God's grace through faith.

[17 : 05] If you have not been moved from being dead in your trespasses and sins to being alive in Christ. So we need to understand that. That needs to be the foundation of anything that we would say about marriage.

That marriage ultimately cannot be successful in God's eyes when it is not a marriage between redeemed people. Now that is not to say that marriages of non-believers can have nothing good come out of them.

That's not at all my point and I don't think that's what the Apostle Paul would say. Because there are two kinds of grace that God gives to people. There's saving grace which I'm talking about now.

God's loving saving grace that he gives to his people to rescue us from sin. Alright? And then there's common grace that he gives to everyone. Not just his people.

He gives to everyone. So that there can be marriages of people who are not believers and good things can come out of those marriages because of common grace. And God can bless those marriages because of common grace.

[18 : 10] We have probably all known at least one or two couples who have been married for years and years and they have a happy marriage but one or both of those people are not believers. I don't want you to hear me saying that you can't have a happy marriage and one that in the eyes of the world is a good marriage if you don't know Christ or if your spouse doesn't know Christ.

That's not my point. That's not the Apostle's point. My point is that you cannot have a marriage that fulfills God's ultimate purpose for marriage if you're not a believer.

If you're not in Christ and you cannot do the things that are described in Ephesians chapter 5 that are necessary in order for your marriage to be a Christ exalting marriage if you're not saved.

So, first thing I want to say to everyone here is believe in Jesus. Believe in Jesus. Now, back to Ephesians chapter 5 verse 15.

These three pairs, these three contrasting couples are all the description of looking carefully how you walk.

[19 : 19] And I said that we have the two columns. We have the positive column and the negative column. And in the positive column we've got being wise, understanding the will of the Lord, and being filled with the Spirit.

Being filled with the Spirit is the last command that Paul gives in this list. Can you see that there? Three commands, alright? The last command that he gives is be filled with the Spirit.

Everything else in verses 19 through 21 describes what it looks like to be filled with the Spirit. Now, let's not confuse being filled with the Spirit with the initial outpouring of God's Spirit into your heart when you're saved.

When we put our faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to live within all of us. Paul says we are all baptized into one body in one Spirit.

So we, at the moment that we trust in Christ, the Spirit comes to live within us. That's not what he's talking about here. What Paul is talking about is another experience of the Spirit's work in your life that happens throughout your life that he calls the filling with the Spirit.

[20 : 28] And being filled with the Spirit is being especially led by him, especially guided by him, and empowered by him for a life of holiness. That's what it means. So we all have the Spirit within us, but to varying degrees, we are filled with the Spirit.

Do you understand that? And everything that follows here in these next couple of verses tells us what does it look like to be filled with the Spirit. So here we go.

Here it is. There's essentially four things. He says this is what we do. Verse 19. Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Alright, that's the first one. Secondly, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart. Thirdly, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And then fourthly, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. You see them? So let's see if we can summarize these a little more quickly.

[21 : 32] Alright? Verse 19. Number one. Addressing one another in song. Alright? Number two. Singing to the Lord.

Number three. Giving thanks to the Lord. And number four. Submitting to one another. Can you see all four of those? That's what it means. That's what the spirit-filled life looks like.

Seems to me, as you read through this list, it seems to be fairly obvious that these all have to do with worship. We're singing. We're making melody.

We are giving thanks to God. And then we typically don't think of submission to other people as an act of worship. But I think that given the fact that it ends this list of three things that are clearly various forms of worship, I think that Paul intends for us to see submission to those in authority over us as an act of devotion to God and as an act of worship toward Him.

So this is about worship. The spirit-filled person is a person who is fueled by worship. That's what they do. When we come together, we address one another with songs of worship.

[22 : 48] When we gather together, we sing songs to God. In everything, we give thanks to Him and we submit to those in authority over us.

It's a strange aspect of worship. It's the one that you really cannot fake very well. You can come in and you can sing all the songs, right?

You can even make, you can make verbal expressions of the things that you are thankful for all the while you harbor bitterness in your heart toward God. Can't you? Some of you probably sang through some of the songs this morning and your mind was totally somewhere else.

Your lips are going along with the songs that are on screen and you're keeping up with Brian as best you can and your mind is totally on lunch or the argument you had last night with someone or something else that's going on in your life.

You can sing without really singing, all right? You can speak words of thanksgiving without being thankful in your heart, but it's really hard to really submit to someone without submitting to someone.

[23 : 59] So this is not an act of worship that we can very easily fake. It's just not. And then as he begins his application of that in our lives, he begins with marriage.

Wives to your own husbands as to the Lord. Now if you'll look down in chapter 6 with me, I want you to see something that I think is interesting.

In chapter 6, verse 1, he moves to the second group of people who have to submit. He defines their submission a little bit differently, but their submission is obedience. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

There's a pattern there. Dresses children, and then he turns and he dresses the other side fathers. And he does the same thing with slaves and masters. Verse 6, slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling with a sincere heart as you would Christ, not by the way of eye service as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

[25 : 20] And then he turns and he addresses the masters. Masters, do the same to them. Stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Now, the thing that strikes me about these two pairs of those in submission and those in authority as compared to husbands and wives is just how short these little paragraphs are.

Look at this. You get four verses on children and parents. I could use a little more verses there on child rearing. I could use more. He just gives us a handful of verses.

Slaves and masters, four verses again. All right? Five verses, actually. Slaves and masters, five verses. Now, husbands and wives, look at that, eleven verses.

And not just more verses, but more content, more material. So, it is as if the Apostle Paul began writing and his intention was to address three series of examples of where we submit and yet he was almost distracted by the spirit who was inspiring him to write this and he just sort of exploded into this beautiful explanation of what marriage is intended to be by God.

[26 : 44] But all of that, all of that is in the context of the spirit-filled worship of his people. See, there are things in these verses that, quite frankly, are difficult to do.

They are. It just begins with wives submitting to their husbands as to the Lord. That's a very difficult thing for ladies to do.

I know that. Because we husbands are sinful people. And we make bad decisions sometimes. We don't always go in the right direction. We don't always take the right steps.

And you're thinking, I'm going to follow this idiot? You know? Submit to your own husbands. All right? That's not an easy thing to do. That's not an easy thing to do when your husband's making good, wise decisions.

Because maybe you're not at that moment endowed with the same wisdom and you disagree, but he's making a good, wise decision. And it's very, very difficult to submit. I get it. It's hard.

[27 : 47] I know that. And it is difficult for husbands. The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself the Savior.

All right? The husband is the head as Christ is head. Well, that's an easy comparison, right? I mean, we don't have much to measure up to. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Jesus died for his bride. And sometimes we, as husbands, we struggle to turn off the television for the sake of our wives.

Okay? It's difficult. It really is difficult to lay down your life in practical ways. It's not that difficult, at least, to conceive of the idea of dying for your wife or your children or your grandchildren.

You know, if a gunman comes in, all the men are going to die in front of their wives. Okay? Except one or two, and they're the losers of the group and kick them out of the church. But all the men are going to die in front of their wives and children because that's kind of wired into who men are.

[28 : 58] Guys, remember I read a story after the tragic shooting of the Batman movie last month? And the story was about the husbands and boyfriends who gave their lives to save the lives of their girlfriends and wives.

There were four separate men who died throwing themselves on top of their girlfriends or wives in that one tragedy. It's kind of wired into men to be those protectors.

Even to the weak, frail men, it's wired into us to want to be the protectors. So to conceive of that is not that difficult. All right? But when we think of Christ laying down his life for his bride, we need to think more than cross.

The Apostle Paul says in Romans chapter 8 that Jesus was born under the law. It's a phrase we pass over. It's a kind of phrase we don't notice when we're reading through a book like Romans.

He was born under the law. But what that means is that Jesus came into the world at a time when he had to fully and perfectly submit to the law of Moses.

[30 : 09] Have you read that stuff? Have you read Leviticus? For you and for me, for his bride, Jesus was born at a time in the history of God's redemption of his people in which he had to fully submit to all of those laws.

And he did it perfectly because he was willing to lay down his life for the sake of his bride and endure that. We are told that he had no place to lay his head.

We are told at the very beginning of his ministry that he fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. Over and over, the Gospels are a story of the suffering of Christ.

It is not the last handful of chapters that talk about the passion of Christ. The passion of Christ is not merely the week leading up to his death. If you look at his life, everything from incarnation, from birth on, was passion, was suffering for Jesus.

Imagine even the incarnation for the infinite, all-glorious God to clothe himself in frail flesh.

[31 : 20] And not Adam-type flesh, flesh under the law. Flesh that would die. That's how he closed himself.

Even the incarnation is laying down his life for the sake of his bride. And every day and every moment, Jesus lays his life down continually.

So, when we are commanded to love our lives as Christ loved his bride, for us husbands, it is far more than I'll jump in front of the bullet for you.

My point is, this is difficult stuff for us to do for both men and for women. The things that are in here are very, very difficult for us. And the key, the key to being, to being able to do this is twofold.

Number one, you must be redeemed. And number two, you must be filled with the Spirit of God. Take a look at what he says at the end of this passage.

[32 : 28] This is where we're going next week, so I'm giving you a preview of next week. Verse 31, he quotes Genesis 2, 24 that we read earlier. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

Genesis 2, 24. Then he says, this mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

In other words, marriage is not just about us. Marriage is not just about our relationships with our spouses. Marriage is not just about you someday getting married.

It's not about that at all. Marriage is ultimately about the display of the glory of Jesus, and that will only happen for you in your marriage if you have been saved by him, and you're in the process of being sanctified by him.

What we need are not improved marriages. What we need are redeemed marriages. Let's pray.