

**Ephesians 5:18-33**  
**January 15, 2023**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: You have probably heard the statistic that approximately 50% of all *Christian* marriages have ended in divorce. Why do you think that happens? What do you think contributes to failed marriages? [Let people engage]

**Transition:** We usually think of the power of the Spirit as necessary for preaching and witnessing, and this is true. And we see that the Apostles experienced repeated fillings after that initial experience at Pentecost. But Paul wrote that the Spirit's fullness is also needed in the home. If our homes are to be a heaven on earth, then we must be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Let's see what he wrote. Would someone volunteer to read this text aloud?

**BOOK:**

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup> always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>21</sup> Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

*Wives and Husbands*

<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing (or having cleansed) her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— <sup>30</sup> for we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” (Gen 2:24) <sup>32</sup> This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

**LOOK:**

Be imitators of God and walk in love. Be filled with the Holy Spirit and let Him lead you to build quality, loving relationships, whether it is a husband-wife relationship, parent-child relationship, or employer-employee relationship, or ANY relationship.

**Close in Prayer**

**Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

***Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 2, pp. 48-52). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.***

**HEAVEN IN YOUR HOME**

*Ephesians 5:18–33*

When home is ruled according to God's Word," said Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "angels might be asked to stay with us, and they would not find themselves out of their element."

The trouble is that many homes are not governed by God's Word—even homes where the members are professing Christians—and the consequences are tragic. Instead of angels being guests in some homes, it seems that demons are the masters. Too many marriages end in the divorce court, and nobody knows how many husbands and wives are emotionally divorced even though they share the same address. The poet William Cowper called the home "the only bliss of Paradise that hast surviv'd the Fall," but too many homes are an outpost of hell instead of a parcel of paradise.

The answer is the Holy Spirit of God! It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can walk in harmony as husbands and wives (Eph. 5:22–33), parents and children (Eph. 6:1–4), and employers and employees (Eph. 6:5–9). The unity of the people of God that Paul described (Eph. 4:1–16) must be translated into daily living if we are to enjoy the harmony that is a foretaste of heaven on earth.

"Be filled with the Spirit" is God's command, and He expects us to obey. The command is plural, so it applies to all Christians and not just to a select few. The verb is in the present tense—"keep on being filled"—so it is an experience we should enjoy constantly and not just on

special occasions. And the verb is passive. We do not fill ourselves but permit the Spirit to fill us. The verb “fill” has nothing to do with contents or quantity, as though we are empty vessels that need a required amount of spiritual fuel to keep going. In the Bible, *filled* means “controlled by.” “They ... were filled with wrath” (Luke 4:28) means “they were controlled by wrath” and for that reason tried to kill Jesus. “The Jews were filled with envy” (Acts 13:45) means that the Jews were controlled by envy and opposed the ministry of Paul and Barnabas. To be “filled with the Spirit” means to be constantly controlled by the Spirit in our mind, emotions, and will.

When a person trusts Christ as his Savior, he is immediately baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Nowhere in the New Testament are we commanded to be baptized by the Spirit, because this is a once-for-all experience that takes place at conversion. When the Spirit came at Pentecost, the believers were baptized by the Spirit and thus the body of Christ was formed (Acts 1:4–5). But they were also “filled with the Spirit” (Acts 2:4), and it was this filling that gave them the power they needed to witness for Christ (Acts 1:8). In Acts 2, the Jewish believers were baptized by the Spirit, and in Acts 10 the Gentile believers had the same experience (Acts 10:44–48; 11:15–17). Thus the body of Christ was made up of Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:11–22). That historic baptism, in two stages, has never been repeated any more than Calvary has been repeated. But that baptism is made personal when the sinner trusts Christ and the Spirit enters in to make him a member of the body of Christ. The baptism of the Spirit means that I belong to Christ’s body. The filling of the Spirit means that my body belongs to Christ.

We usually think of the power of the Spirit as necessary for preaching and witnessing, and this is true. (See Acts 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 13:9. The Apostles experienced repeated fillings after that initial experience at Pentecost.) But Paul wrote that the Spirit’s fullness is also needed in the home. If our homes are to be a heaven on earth, then we must be controlled by the Holy Spirit. But how can a person tell whether or not he is filled with the Spirit? Paul stated that there are three evidences of the fullness of the Spirit in the life of the believer: he is *joyful* (Eph. 5:19), *thankful* (Eph. 5:20), and *submissive* (Eph. 5:21–33). Paul said nothing about miracles or tongues, or other special manifestations. He stated that the home can be a heaven on earth if each family member is controlled by the Spirit, and is joyful, thankful, and submissive.

### **Joyful (Eph. 5:19)**

Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Christian joy is not a shallow emotion that, like a thermometer, rises and falls with the changing atmosphere of the home. Rather, Christian joy is a deep experience of adequacy and confidence in spite of the circumstances around us. The Christian can be joyful even in the midst of pain and suffering. This kind of joy is not a thermometer but a thermostat. Instead of rising and falling with the circumstances, it determines the spiritual temperature of the circumstances. Paul put it beautifully when he wrote, “I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Phil. 4:11).

To illustrate this joy, Paul used the familiar image of drunkenness: “Be not drunk with wine ... but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). When the believers at Pentecost were filled with the Spirit, the crowd accused them of being drunk with new wine (Acts 2:13–15). There was such a joyfulness about them that the unbelievers could think of no better comparison. But some practical lessons can be learned from the contrasts. To begin with, the drunk is under the control of another force, since alcohol is actually a depressant. He feels a great sense of release—all his troubles are gone. He can “lick anybody in the house!” The drunk is not ashamed to express himself (though what he says and does is shameful), nor can he hide what is going on in his life.

Transfer this picture to the believer who is filled with the Spirit. God controls his life, and he experiences a deep joy he is not afraid to express to the glory of God. Of course, the drunk is really out of control, since the alcohol affects his brain, while the believer experiences a beautiful self-control that is really God in control. Self-control is among the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). “The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (1 Cor. 14:32). The drunk makes a fool of himself, but the Spirit-filled Christian glorifies God and is willing to be a “fool for Christ’s sake” (1 Cor. 4:10). The drunk calls attention to himself, while the Spirit-filled believer is a witness for Christ.

It is certainly not difficult to live or work with someone who is filled with the Spirit and joyful. He has a song in his heart and on his lips. The drunk often sings, but his songs only reveal the corruption in his heart. The Spirit-filled Christian’s song comes from God, a song he could never sing apart from the Spirit’s power. God even gives us songs in the night (Ps. 42:8). In spite of pain and shame, Paul and Silas were able to sing praises to God in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:25), and the result was the conversion of the jailer and his family. What a happy time they all had that midnight hour—and they did not need to get drunk to enjoy it!

“Your neighborhood tavern is the friendliest place in town!” That slogan appeared in a headline of a special newspaper insert during “National Tavern Month,” so I decided to test its veracity. I watched the newspapers for several weeks and cut out items that related to taverns—and all of them were connected with brawls and murders. The friendliest place in town! But this headline reminded me that people who drink together often experience a sympathy and conviviality. This fact is no argument for alcohol, but it does illustrate a point: Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit enjoy being together and experience a sense of joyful oneness in the Lord. They do not need the false stimulants of the world. They have the Spirit of God—and He is all they need.

### **Thankful (Eph. 5:20)**

Someone defined the home as “the place where we are treated the best—and complain the most!” How true this is! “My father never talks to me unless he wants to bawl me out or ask about my grades,” a teenager once told me. “After all, a guy needs some encouragement once in a while!” Marriage counselors tell us that “taking each other for granted” is one of the chief causes of marital problems. Being thankful to God for each other is a secret of a happy home, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives us the grace of thankfulness.

How does a grateful heart promote harmony in the home? For one thing, the sincerely grateful person realizes that he is enriched because of others, which is a mark of humility. The person who thinks the world owes him a living is never thankful for anything. He thinks he is doing others a favor by permitting them to serve him. The thankful heart is usually humble, a heart that gladly acknowledges God as the “Giver of every good and perfect gift” (James 1:17). Like Mary’s gift to Jesus in John 12, gratitude fills the house with fragrance.

To be sure, all of us are grateful for some things at some special occasions; but Paul commanded his readers to be thankful for all things at all times. This exhortation in itself proves our need of the Spirit of God, because in our own strength we could never obey this commandment. Can we really be thankful in times of suffering, disappointment, and even bereavement? Keep in mind that Paul was a prisoner when he wrote those words, yet he was thankful for what God was doing in him and for him (Eph. 1:16; 5:4, 20; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3, 12; 2:7; 3:17; 4:2). When a Christian finds himself in a difficult situation, he should immediately give thanks to the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Spirit, to keep his

heart from complaining and fretting. The devil moves in when a Christian starts to complain, but thanksgiving in the Spirit defeats the devil and glorifies the Lord. “In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thes. 5:18).

The word *gratitude* comes from the same root word as *grace*. If we have experienced the grace of God, then we ought to be grateful for what God brings to us. *Thank* and *think* also come from the same root word. If we would think more, we would thank more.

### **Submissive (Eph. 5:21–33)**

Paul applied the principle of harmony to husbands and wives (Eph. 5:21–33), parents and children (Eph. 6:1–4), and masters and servants (Eph. 6:5–9); and he began with the admonition that each submit to the other (Eph. 5:21). Does this suggest that the children tell the parents what to do, or that the masters obey the servants? Of course not! *Submission* has nothing to do with the *order* of authority, but rather governs the *operation* of authority, how it is given and how it is received. Often Jesus tried to teach His disciples not to throw their weight around, or seek to become great at somebody else’s expense. Unfortunately, they failed to learn the lesson, and even at the Last Supper they were arguing over who was the greatest (Luke 22:24–27). When Jesus washed their feet, He taught them that the greatest is the person who uses his authority to build up people and not, like the Pharisees, to build up his authority and make himself important. We are to esteem others “more important than ourselves” (Rom 12:10; Phil. 2:1–4). By nature, we want to promote ourselves, but the Holy Spirit enables us to submit ourselves.

As you study Paul’s words to husbands and wives, remember that he was writing to believers. He was nowhere suggesting that women are inferior to men, or that all women must be in subjection to all men in every situation. The fact that he uses Christ and the church as his illustration is evidence that he has the Christian home in mind.

***Wives, submit yourselves (vv. 22–24).*** He gives two reasons for this command: the lordship of Christ (Eph. 5:22) and the headship of the man in Christ (Eph. 5:23). When the Christian wife submits herself to Christ and lets Him be the Lord of her life, she will have no difficulty submitting to her husband. This does not mean that she becomes a slave, for the husband is also to submit to Christ. And if both are living under the lordship of Christ, there can be only harmony. Headship is not dictatorship. “Each for the other, both for the Lord.” The Christian husband and wife should pray together and spend time in the Word, so that they might know God’s will for their individual lives and for their home. Most of the marital conflicts I have dealt with as a pastor have stemmed from failure of the husband and or wife to submit to Christ, spend time in His Word, and seek to do His will each day.

This explains why a Christian should marry a Christian and not become “unequally yoked together” with an unbeliever (2 Cor. 6:14–18). If the Christian is submitted to Christ, he will not try to establish a home that disobeys the Word of God. Such a home invites civil war from the beginning. But something else is important. The Christian couple must be careful to submit to Christ’s lordship even before they are married. Unless the couple prays together and sincerely seeks God’s will in His Word, their marriage begins on a weak foundation. Sins committed before marriage (“We’re Christians—we can get away with this!”) have a way of causing problems after marriage. Certainly God is able to forgive, but something very precious is lost just the same. Dr. William Culbertson, former president of Moody Bible Institute, used to warn about “the sad consequences of forgiven sins,” and engaged Christian couples need to take that warning to heart.

***Husbands, love your wives (vv. 25–33).*** Paul had much more to say to the Christian husbands than to the wives. He set for them a very high standard: Love your wives “even as Christ also loved the church.” Paul was lifting married love to the highest level possible, for he saw in the Christian home an illustration of the relationship between Christ and the church. God established marriage for many reasons. For one thing, it meets man’s *emotional* needs. “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18). Marriage also has a *social* purpose in the bearing of children to continue the race (Gen. 1:28). Paul indicated a *physical* purpose for marriage—to help man and woman fulfill the normal desires given them by God (1 Cor. 7:1–3). But in Ephesians 5, Paul indicated also a *spiritual* purpose in marriage, as the husband and wife experience with each other the submission and the love of Christ (Eph. 5:22–33).

If the husband makes Christ’s love for the church the pattern for loving his wife, then he will love her *sacrificially* (Eph. 5:25). Christ gave Himself for the church; so the husband, in love, gives himself for his wife. Jacob so loved Rachel that he sacrificially worked fourteen years to win her. True Christian love “seeketh not her own” (1 Cor. 13:5)—it is not selfish. If a husband is submitted to Christ and filled with the Spirit, his sacrificial love will willingly pay a price that she might be able to serve Christ in the home and glorify Him.

The husband’s love will also be a *sanctifying* love (Eph. 5:26–27). The word *sanctify* means “to set apart.” In the marriage ceremony, the husband is set apart to belong to the wife, and the wife is set apart to belong to the husband. Any interference with this God-given arrangement is sin. Today, Christ is cleansing His church through the ministry of His Word (John 15:3; 17:17). The love of the husband for his wife ought to be cleansing her (and him) so that both are becoming more like Christ. Even their physical relationship should be so controlled by God that it becomes a means of spiritual enrichment as well as personal enjoyment (1 Cor. 7:3–5). The husband is not to “use” his wife for his own pleasure, but rather is to show the kind of love that is mutually rewarding and sanctifying. The marriage experience is one of constant growth when Christ is the Lord of the home. Love always enlarges and enriches, while selfishness does just the opposite.

The church today is not perfect; it has spots and wrinkles. Spots are caused by defilement on the outside, while wrinkles are caused by decay on the inside. Because the church becomes defiled by the world, it needs constant cleansing, and the Word of God is the cleansing agent. “Keep yourselves unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). Strictly speaking, there should be no wrinkles in the church, because wrinkles are evidence of old age and internal decay. As the church is nourished by the Word, these wrinkles ought to disappear. Like a beautiful bride, the church ought to be clean and youthful, which is possible through the Spirit of God using the Word of God. One day the church will be presented in heaven “a glorious church” at the coming of Jesus Christ (Jude 24).

The husband’s love for his wife should be sacrificial and sanctifying, but it should also be *satisfying* (Eph. 5:28–30). In the marriage relationship, the husband and wife become “one flesh.” Therefore, whatever each does to the other, he does to himself or herself. It is a mutually satisfying experience. The man who loves his wife is actually loving his own body, since he and his wife are one flesh. As he loves her, he is nourishing her. Just as love is the circulatory system of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:16), so love is the nourishment of the home. How many people have confessed, “I am starved for love.” There should be no starvation for love in the Christian home, for the husband and wife should so love each other that their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs are met. If both are submitted to the Lord, and to each other, they will be so satisfied that they will not be tempted to look anywhere else for fulfillment.

Our Christian homes are to be pictures of Christ's relationship to His church. Each believer is a member of Christ's body, and each believer is to help nourish the body in love (Eph. 4:16). We are one with Christ. The church is His body and His bride, and the Christian home is a divinely ordained illustration of this relationship. This certainly makes marriage a serious matter.

Paul referred to the creation of Eve and the forming of the first home (Gen. 2:18–24). Adam had to give part of himself in order to get a bride, but Christ gave all of Himself to purchase His bride at the cross. God opened Adam's side, but sinful men pierced Christ's side. So united are a husband and wife that they are "one flesh." Their union is even closer than that of parents and children. The believer's union with Christ is even closer and, unlike human marriage, will last for all eternity. Paul closed with a final admonition that the husband love his wife and that the wife reverence (respect) her husband, all of which require the power of the Holy Spirit.

If Christian husbands and wives have the power of the Spirit to enable them, and the example of Christ to encourage them, why do too many Christian marriages fail? Somebody is out of the will of God. Just because two Christians know each other and get along together does not mean they are supposed to get married. In fact, not every believer is supposed to marry. It is sometimes God's will for a Christian to remain single (Matt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:7–9). It is wrong for a believer to marry an unbeliever, but it is also wrong for two Christians to marry out of the will of God.

But even if two Christians marry in the will of God, they must stay in God's will if their home is to be the creative fellowship God wants it to be. "The fruit of the Spirit is love" (Gal. 5:22), and unless both husband and wife are walking in the Spirit they cannot share the love of Christ, the love that is so beautifully described in 1 Corinthians 13. The root of most marital problems is sin, and the root of all sin is selfishness. Submission to Christ and to one another is the only way to overcome selfishness, for when we submit, the Holy Spirit can fill us and enable us to love one another in a sacrificial, sanctifying, satisfying way—the way Christ loves the church.

To experience the fullness of the Spirit a person must first possess the Spirit—be a Christian. Then there must be a sincere desire to glorify Christ, since this is why the Holy Spirit was given (John 16:14). We do not use the Holy Spirit; He uses us. There must be a deep thirst for God's fullness, a confession that we cannot do His will apart from His power. We must claim the promise of John 7:37–39: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink!" By faith yield yourself to Christ; by faith ask Him for the fullness of the Spirit. By faith receive. When you find yourself joyful, thankful, and submissive, you will know that God has answered.

One more important factor should be considered. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to work in our lives. Read Colossians 3:16–4:1 and you will see a parallel to our Ephesians passage. And you will note that to be filled with the Word of God produces joy, thanksgiving, and submission. In other words, when you are controlled by the Word of God, you are filled with the Spirit of God. Not only husbands and wives, but all Christians need to spend time daily letting the Word of Christ dwell in them richly, for then the Spirit of God can work in our lives to make us joyful, thankful, and submissive. And this means heaven in the home—or wherever God may put us.

**Hoehner, H. W. (1985). *Ephesians*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 640-641) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

5:18. Going from the general to the specific, Paul explained how wisdom, as an intellectual and spiritual capacity, works out in one's conduct. Verse 18 includes a negative command and a positive one. The negative is to abstain from getting **drunk on wine** with which there is incorrigibility. The word *asōtia* is translated **debauchery** (NIV, RSV), "excess" (KJV), "riot" (ASV), and "dissipation" (NASB). All these give the idea of profligate or licentious living that is wasteful. In this verse the literal sense of incorrigibility seems best, for a drunken man acts abnormally. Rather than controlling himself, the wine controls him. Conversely, the positive command is, **Be filled with the Spirit**. Thus a believer, rather than controlling himself, is controlled by the Holy Spirit. It may be more accurate to say that the Holy Spirit is the "Agent" of the filling (cf. Gal. 5:16) and Christ is the Content of the filling (Col. 3:15). Thus, in this relationship, as a believer is yielded to the Lord and controlled by Him, he increasingly manifests the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). The Spirit's indwelling (John 7:37–39; 14:17; Rom. 5:5; 8:9; 1 Cor. 2:12; 6:19–20; 1 John 3:24; 4:13), sealing (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30), and baptism (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27) occur at the time of regeneration and thus are not commanded. However, believers *are* commanded to be filled constantly with the Holy Spirit. Each Christian has all the Spirit, but the command here is that the Spirit have all of him. The wise walk, then, is one that is characterized by the Holy Spirit's control.

5:19–21. Paul then gave four results of being filled with the Spirit. First is communication with **one another with psalms** (*psalmois*, OT psalms sung with stringed instruments such as harps), **hymns** (*hymnois*, praises composed by Christians), **and spiritual songs** (a general term). Second is communication with **the Lord** by singing and making melody (*psallontes*, singing with a stringed instrument) **in the heart**. Church music, then, should be a means of believers' ministering to each other, and singing should be a means of worshiping the Lord. Third is thanking **God the Father** (cf. 1:2–3, 17; 3:14) continually for all things (cf. Col. 3:17; 1 Thess. 5:18). Fourth, Spirit-controlled believers are to **submit to one another**, willingly serving others and being under them rather than dominating them and exalting themselves. But basic to Christians' attitudes toward others is their **reverence for Christ**. Paul next elaborated on this subject of submission (Eph. 5:22–6:9).

## 2. APPLICATION (5:22–6:9)

Having admonished believers to be wise by being controlled by the Holy Spirit, Paul now applied this to specific life-relationships. It is relatively easy to exhibit a Spirit-filled life for one or two hours a week in church, but it takes the work of the Holy Spirit to exhibit godliness not only on Sundays but also in everyday relationships between wives and husbands, children and parents, and slaves and masters. In each of these three relationships the first partner is commanded to be submissive or obedient (5:22; 6:1, 5). But the second partner is also to show submissiveness by his care and concern for the first partner. Both partners are to act toward one another as a service rendered to the Lord.

### a. *Wives and husbands* (5:22–33).

5:22–24. **Wives** are to **submit to their husbands**. (The verb "submit," absent in Gr. in v. 22, is borrowed from v. 21.) **As to the Lord** does not mean that a wife is to submit to her husband in the same way she submits to the Lord, but rather that her submission to her husband *is* her service rendered "to the Lord" (cf. Col. 3:18). The reason for this submission is that **the husband is the head of the wife** (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3), and this is compared to Christ's headship over

the church (Eph. 5:23; cf. 4:15; Col. 1:18). **As Christ is the Savior of the church, His body**, so a husband should be the protector of his wife, who is “one flesh” with him (Gen. 2:24). **As the church** is in submission **to Christ, so also** a wife **should** be to her husband. It would be foolish to think of the church being head over Christ. But submission does not mean inferiority. It means that she recognizes that her husband is the head of the home and responds to him accordingly without usurping his authority to herself.

5:25. After speaking of a wife’s submission to her husband (vv. 22–24), Paul then stated the measure of the husband’s love for his wife (vv. 25–32). **Husbands** are commanded, **Love your wives** (cf. v. 33) **just as Christ loved the church**. The word “love” (*agapaō*) means seeking the highest good for another person (cf. 2:4). This is an unselfish love as seen in Christ’s sacrificial death in which He **gave Himself up for** the church (cf. 5:2; John 10:11, 15, 17–18; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 5:25; Heb. 9:14). A wife’s submission in no way hints that a husband may lord it over his spouse, as a despot commanding a slave. The “submit-love” relationship is a beautiful mixture of harmonious partnership in marriage.

5:26–27. The purpose of Christ’s death was **to make** the church **holy** (*hagiasē*, “to set apart” for Himself as His own forever; cf. Heb. 2:11; 10:10, 14; 13:12) which He did by **cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word**. This is not baptismal regeneration for that would be contrary to Paul’s teaching in this book as well as all his other writings and the entire New Testament. Metaphorically, being regenerated is pictured as being cleansed by water (cf. “the washing of rebirth” in Titus 3:5). The “Word” (*rhēmati*) refers to the “preached Word” that unbelievers hear (cf. *rhēma* in Eph. 6:17; Rom. 10:8, 17; 1 Peter 1:25). The ultimate purpose of Christ’s death is **to present ... to Himself** the church as **radiant** or “in splendor” (RSV). This adjective, “glorious,” in NEB, is not attributive (as in NIV ‘s “a radiant church”). It is in the predicate position because there is an article before church (to “present the church ... glorious,” NEB).

This purpose is then described negatively (**without stain or wrinkle**—no taint of sin or spiritual decay—**or any other blemish**) and positively (**holy and blameless**). These last two adjectives (*hagia*, “set apart,” and *amōmos*, “without blemish,” like a spotless lamb) are stated in Ephesians 1:4 as the purpose of God’s election: that Christ may present His church to Himself in all its perfection (cf. “make holy” in 5:26; also cf. *hagious* and *amōmous* in Col. 1:22). Whereas human brides prepare themselves for their husbands, Christ prepares His own bride for Himself.

5:28–30. In verses 28–32 Paul applied the truths given in verses 25–27. As the church is the extension of Christ, so is the wife an “extension” of her husband. No one hates **his own body** but takes care of **it**. **Feeds** (*ektrephei*; cf. “bring them up” in 6:4) **and cares for** (*thalpei*; cf. 1 Thes. 2:7) is literally, “nourishes and cherishes.” Thus as Christ loves the church, **His body** (of which all believers are **members**; cf. Eph. 4:25), so should **husbands ... love their wives as their own bodies** (5:28; cf. v. 33). Men care for their bodies even though they are imperfect and so they should care for their wives though they are imperfect.

5:31–32. Verse 31 is a free rendering of Genesis 2:24, indicating that the bond between husband and **wife** is greater than that between parent and child. The greatness of the **mystery** refers to **the two** becoming **one flesh**. But then Paul returned to mention the wonderful bond between **Christ and the church**, which illustrates the love of a husband for his wife.

5:33. This is a restatement of the responsibilities of the husband and wife toward each other: **love** by the **husband** (cf. v. 25) and **respect** by the **wife**.

**Anders, M. (1999). Galatians-Colossians (Vol. 8, pp. 172–175). Broadman & Holman Publishers.**

**5:18.** Ephesus was a center of pagan worship and ritual. The Ephesian culture worshiped Baccus, the god of wine and drunken orgies. They believed that to commune with their god and to be led by him, they had to be drunk. In this drunken state, they could determine the will of their god and determine how best to serve and obey him.

Paul was talking about how to commune with the God of heaven, how to live for him, how to serve and obey him, how to determine his will. It was natural for him to draw the contrast between how the god of Ephesus is served and how the God of heaven is served. With the God of heaven, you do not get drunk with wine. Rather, you are filled with the Spirit. Being drunk with wine leads to the sexual sins and immorality of darkness described above. By being filled with the Spirit, you can determine God's will and serve him faithfully in moral living.

What does it mean to be **filled with the Spirit**? Some interpreters equate this command with instances of being filled with the Spirit in the Book of Acts in which miraculous things happened: people spoke in tongues; prophecies and visions were given; people were healed. "Be filled" in this verse (*plarao*) is not the same word as the one used in the Book of Acts (*pimplemi*), nor are the consequences the same. Rather than understanding this command in verse 18 to have anything to do with miraculous or extraordinary happenings, it is better to understand it in context. In this ethical context, it means directed, influenced, and ultimately governed by the Holy Spirit.

In Colossians 3:16, the Colossian believers are instructed to **let the word of Christ dwell in you richly**. The consequences of this are the same as the consequences here in Ephesians 5 of being filled with the Spirit. That suggests that there is a close correlation in meaning between the two.

This filling, then, is best understood, as a command for the believer to yield himself to the illuminating, convicting, and empowering work of the Holy Spirit. As he works in our hearts through his Word, our lives are brought into conformity with the will of God (v. 17). (A fuller and more technical discussion of this matter can be found in "Deeper Discoveries.")

**5:19–21.** Four Greek participles—**speak, make music** (melodying), **giving thanks** (thanking), and **submit** (submitting)—in verses 19–21 modify the verb "be filled" of verse 18, describing the person filled with the Holy Spirit. The first two participles suggest the importance of music and Scripture in being filled with the Spirit. An attitude of gratitude is a third characteristic of being filled with the Spirit. Finally, an attitude of mutual submission among believers is a characteristic of being filled with the Spirit.

Following the fourth participle, *being subject* (or submitting) to one another, Paul then moves directly into three examples of relationships in which believers are to be subject to one another: husband-wife relationships, parent-child relationships, and master-slave relationships. Paul's important point is that in each of these sets of relationships the one in authority is to be submissive to the needs of those under him and those in submission are to be subject to the authority of the one over him. For example, the wife is to be subject to the authority of her husband, but her husband is to be subject to the needs of the wife. Children are to be subject to the authority of their parents, but parents are to be subject to the needs of the children. Slaves are to be subject to the authority of their masters, but masters are to be subject to the needs of their slaves. The principle is an attitude of mutual subjection, which is a mark of being filled with the

Holy Spirit. It is simply a matter of fulfilling the golden rule: doing to others as we would have others do to us.

#### **D. The Role of Wives (vv. 22–24, 33)**

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *Wives are to respect their husbands and submit to them as to the Lord.*

**5:22–24.** The wife is to be subject to her husband as to the Lord. This does not mean that she submits to her husband in the same way and to the same degree as she does the Lord, since the husband might ask her to disobey God. Rather she serves the Lord by having a submissive heart toward her husband and by obeying him as long as it does not require her to disobey the Lord. The reason she is called upon to be subject to her husband is that the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. As the church is to be subject to Christ, so the wife is to be subject to her husband. This subjection does not mean inferiority. It is clear that male and female are both created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and that in Christ, where personal worth is concerned, there is “neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). However, in the overall scheme of things, God has placed all of us in differing positions of authority and submission. The man may be in authority at home but submissive at work. The woman may be in submission at home and in authority at work. The point is, all social order depends on people’s willingness to work together and ability to determine who is the head of certain endeavors. God’s intention is that the husband be the head of the relationship with his wife.

**5:33.** After discussing the role of the husband, Paul comes back in a summary statement in verse 33 to add that the wife is to respect her husband. In summary, she is to be subject to her husband and to respect him. **Respect** (*phobetai*) literally means “fear.” It can refer, however, to the fear a person should have before God, a reverence and respect (Luke 1:50; 18:2; Acts 10:35; 1 Pet. 2:17; Rev. 14:7; 19:5). This type of reverence and regard should characterize the relationship of a wife and her husband.

#### **E. The Role of Husbands (vv. 25–32)**

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the church and gave himself up for her.*

**5:25–27.** After instructing wives to be subject to their husbands, he instructs husbands to love their wives so completely and so righteously that the wife need never fear or suffer from her life of submission. Husbands are to **love [their] wives just as Christ loved the church**. How did Christ love the church? He **gave himself up for her**. Jesus dedicated his life to the establishment and welfare of the church. He ultimately gave his life for the church. To that degree, and in that quality, the husband is to love his wife. He is to give himself up for her. He is to dedicate his life to the physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare of his wife. Following the example of Christ, he is to give his wife not only all that he has but also all that he is. When a husband loves his wife so completely, the wife need never fear submission.

Paul goes on to extend the picture of Christ and the church. Christ loved the church that he might make her holy, or set her apart for himself. He did this by the **washing with water through the word**. Some Bible teachers do not think Paul is referring to water (baptism) in this

verse. They understand the water to be a figure of speech, referring to the cleansing that the Holy Spirit brings to the soul through repentance, after hearing the Word of God. It is as Jesus said in John 15:3, “You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.” Applying water to the outside of the physical body can have no effect whatsoever to the spiritual cleansing that makes one holy. Through repentance, the water of the word reaches the innermost recesses of the soul, cleansing and making it holy.

Other scholars, however, believe that Paul is, indeed, alluding to baptism here, understanding that the early church would only have baptized someone who had truly repented. In this understanding, baptism would be an outward sign of repentance and of the spiritual cleansing resulting from the repentance, itself a result of hearing and obeying the Word. The New Testament does not suggest that baptism cleanses a person apart from repentance or that baptism apart from personal faith can save a person.

We might amplify the meaning of this phrase by saying that the true church heard the Word of Christ preached and believed it. They were born again, regenerated, washed and cleansed spiritually by believing the Word. If Paul were alluding to baptism here, then the washing of the water in baptism would be symbolic of the inner cleansing that had already taken place through the Word.

The result of this work of Christ is that the church is **radiant ... without stain or wrinkle ... holy and blameless**. If a husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church, his love and care will have a sanctifying influence on the wife, who will experience personal benefit and progress as a result. The wife will never be perfect, but she becomes more than she would if the husband does not love her as Christ loved the church.

**5:28–32.** After having presented the work of Christ for the church, Paul now comes back to the reality of husband-wife relationships. He repeats the fact that husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. Even though the husband lives in an imperfect body, he loves it, nourishes it, and cherishes it. So he is to do the same for his wife, even though she is imperfect.

Paul repeats Genesis 2:24, establishing that a husband and wife are to become one flesh, and closes by restating that the relationship between the wife and a husband is like the relationship between Christ and the church.

**MAIN IDEA REVIEW:** *Be imitators of God, and walk in love. Be filled with the Holy Spirit, and let him determine the quality of husband-wife relationships.*

**Fields, W. C. (1972). *Ephesians*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher's Bible Commentary* (pp. 747–748). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.**

Right attitudes are important, but they are sterile without right actions. The new life in Christ is contrasted with the old life (vv. 17–29). A difference in character will mean a difference in conduct. The Holy Spirit is an active agent in this new quality of daily life (vv. 30–32).

Chapter 5 continues with social ethics guidelines. The subject shifts from internal relationships of the church to ethics in a society that is alien to God and hostile to God's children. In 5:1–21 Paul lists the kinds of things that should characterize the believer. They are intended to be part of a contrasting life-style to the pagan world. Paul does not call for isolation from the world, however. This would contradict the missionary imperative each believer has. But he does call for differentness in manner of life.

Marriage and home relationships should be affected by the Christian way of life. He suggests some practical out-workings of their faith in the man-wife relationships (vv. 22–32). He finds a good illustration for his purpose in the ties which bind Christ and the church.

Further fruits of Christian love should be found in household circles (6:1–9). The believer should have, as a by-product of his faith, unity and harmony in his home relationships. Parent-child behavior should reflect special qualities above and beyond the normal expectations of pagan society. Master-servant roles are to be tempered by consideration and respect not usually found in the Greco-Roman world of that time.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Ephesians 5:18-33). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**

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