

LSB Ephesians 5:22 - 33

22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body. 31 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great, but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

We've been working through this section on the christian walk, as opposed to how the fallen world without God walks in darkness and blindness.

Paul lays out the foundations of the structure of what happened that called us out of this dead world and gave us a new life connected to the very God of creation. We were formerly dead in our trespasses and sins, but now we are alive, together with Christ. Quickened from the dead and made alive by Jesus.

He has given to us the Holy Spirit who lives in us and helps us, while we are here in this remaining sinful flesh, to live at a level different from how the world lives.

And beginning with chapter 4, Paul having finished with the doctrines of

who we are and how we got rescued out of the world, begins his application of the truths of who we now are. This is who you are, chapters 1 - 3. This is how we walk. As christians, this is how we roll. Different than the world.

We live, because of our inner helper, we live at a higher level than the world around us. We enjoy fellowship with our Creator and we live at a level of holiness different from the world.

And Paul has carried that comparative theme throughout these chapters. This is the level the fallen world lives at, but christians enjoy a higher level of holy living. And the bottom line is; thriving. Christians thrive in a failing world.

Because God has rescued us out of the fallen world swirling towards the drain, and lifted us up to higher standards, and enabled us to actually attain a different standard than the world around us, there is thriving.

It's just built into God's design. Live within His guidelines, and it's automatic. You enjoy thriving that the world constantly strives for in their blindness and never finds. We have it.

And no where is the difference, the gap, if you will, between how the fallen blind world lives, searching for thriving, and how christians who are obedient actually do thrive, than in the area of christian marriages and families.

That gap was always present, but within the boundaries of my lifetime, that gap has become an ocean. There has been and continues to be a literal revolution in the world's departure from God's designed moral limits of one man, one woman, in a monogamous marriage, for life.

That single breakdown at the most primal social level then effects everything. If you can break God's design for marriage, everything else in the social structure out from the family unit becomes broken. Pull out the

foundation stones and the building collapses.

Just this week, in the headlines, 3.3 out of a hundred teens claims to be transgender and another 2.2% beyond those are questioning their gender. That's 5.5%. And of course the regular fallen sinful kids bully the weaker more confused fallen kids. And instead of thriving we have a crisis in teen suicides. A new crisis: Loneliness. Hello. Find a wife. Cling to her.

Satan isn't stupid. He pulls out the foundation stones and the building can no longer stand. Survive the womb, somehow survive a parentless childhood of hired care givers, until you're a teen, and pull the plug then. Satan wants you dead either way. Unborn, born, children, teens, he wants them dead.

Broken families affects his cause. And the fallout is, we christians get blamed for the suicides. Its our fault. We refused to acknowledge and approve the growing demand of mutual self delusion, and the world points at us and says, you christians are the bullies that caused the suicide rate.

Take that to it's logical conclusion. Illogical but hey, it's Satan's kingdom, and the way to solve the problem is to outlaw christians and their consciences and their book which they claim is authoritative. Mark my words.

OK, then, the foundation stones that caused the building to collapse is right here in what Paul is talking about in Ephesians chapter 5, and we're picking up the remainder of this chapter this morning beginning at verse 25. We've spent two other mornings just looking at vss. 22 - 24. Those studies are on line if you missed them.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, X2

Easy peasy guys. All you have to do is love your wife at a sacrificial level equal to Christ giving up heaven and equality with the Father, and coming

to earth to be spit upon and murdered on a cross which was the purchase price for the church that He loved so much that He would pay that price.

It's as if Paul looked around creation for a metaphor to describe the husband's role in all of this, and nothing in the entire creation measured up to be useful as a comparative picture. And so Paul goes all the way into the heavens and says, marriage, christian marriage can only be compared to a single other worldly communion and cost. Christ and His church.

A love so strong that it drove Him out of heaven, out of equality on His throne with His Father, and to an earth that hated and despised Him. They dogged His trail until the day that God ordained, and then they nailed His hands and feet to a cross and He died.

You say, who does that??! Why would anyone DO that??! And the answer is love. Christ was willing to leave heaven and die on a cross in order to purchase the bride that He loves. That was the cost. Pinch yourself. Here we are.

And Paul says; Men, that's your example to follow. That's the standard of sacrifice and love you are to bring to your wives.

Women love to watch the fantasy channel. I get it. It's the world's fantasy version of something approaching the kind of love that Paul calls for here in Ephesians 5. For the world, it's unobtainium. Fantasium. Can't have ium. But still fun to watch and dream and fantasize about those glorious good looking men who understand women. Think like women. Love like women think they want to be loved.

Ladies, what if you could have a guy who would leave wealth and come down here to enemy territory and breathtakingly rescue you from imminent doom. He gives up everything, to have you. He cherishes you beyond his own life. Sound good? Better than Hallmark?

That's what Paul is describing here for you ladies. The problem is; Y'all

have to recruit from the fallen human race. I wish I could be that guy, but I look back on my track record, and it's a mess of human failure.

OK, then, we've been throwing around the L (love) word a lot but there's a problem. In our fallen not fully redeemed flesh we are still broken. Far far better to be a christian and broken than the hopelessly confused blind world that's just feeling along with feelers in a blind dark cave.

We've got a book. We have the Holy Spirit to help us order our broken affections and align them with the book. Our eyes, with the illumination of the Holy Spirit living in us, and this God breathed book have sight. We're a million times better off than the blind stumbling world. But we're still broke.

Paul's famous 7th chapter in Romans where his old inner man is battling with his new inner man connected to the Holy Spirit. Summarized for us in Galatians 5:16 - 18a; *16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh craves what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law....*

All of that to say that true love isn't non stop gush. Non stop Hallmark feel good. Not here. Not now. Not in this current journey.

Jesus comes out of heaven and leaves wealth and status behind, driven by love for His bride, but notice the next verse in Paul's metaphor.

26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she would be holy and blameless.

Sanctify here means separation and removal. This process is painful. It's about as fun as surgical cancer tissue removal.

Christ came out of heaven and purchased a wife, that, frankly, is about as appealing as someone scooped out of a sewer pond with a net. There's a beautiful bride under all that poo, somewhere, but clean up and new clothing is a must. That's an accurate picture of Christ and His bride.

That's what's so ludicrous about the pharisees of Jesus day who thought they were righteous. They thought they were smokin hot attractive to God and His response is in Isaiah 64:6

*6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;*

He threw us a rope in the sewage and pulled us out, but He isn't having the wedding ceremony with the sewer clothes on.

The rescue is just the beginning. Then we spend a lifetime being washed in the words of this book. Salvation is just getting pulled out of the sewage with a rope. There's lots to do after that before we're a glorious bride, clothed in spotless white, with no spot or wrinkle, holy and blameless.

How're we doing in that process? If the Word of God is the water that cleanses and washes the sewer filth from us, how's that going?

Psalm 119:9 - 11 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

10 With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Immersion into the waters of this book is what cleanses the sewage from us and dresses us in fine garments, white and clean. It is the surgical knife that cuts out the cancer in Hebrews 4: Hebrews 4:12

12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

How does all of this painful cleansing fit into Paul's metaphor of how the husband is to love his wife?

Pretty simple logic, not so simple to do. If the husband is leader and wife is follower, it's up to the husband to lead his wife in a life long surgery and washing of sin by this book.

Rightly ordered love is a love that denies worldly things and supplies heavenly ones. We christian husbands and fathers bear some weight of responsibility in leading our wives and families into these washing cleansing waters of this book.

I look back over 49 years and if I'm honest, it's near utter failure in this. Not total. We are better off than the world around us, but I was lazy and weak in my duty here. There's no do overs. And frankly it's easy to pontificate when you're 72 and hard to get it done when you're 29. I'm grateful for grace.

Paul must have understood the conundrum well, because he appeals to the weakness of the husband in the next verses.

28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body.

Let's be honest here. We all nourish and cherish our own flesh. Paul's argument is this. If you nourish and cherish your wife, it comes pouring back on you. She is you, and you are her. Right. The two become one

flesh.

So carrying that logic to it's end, nourishing and cherishing your wife is like nourishing and cherishing yourself, which is our natural fallen default. Since you're one flesh, if you nourish and cherish her, you've nourished and cherished yourself. There's an undeniable magical connection.

Christ nourishes and cherishes the church. He pours out Himself to give the church everything she could need or want. We are members of Him. It's a win win synergy.

I'm going to digress just here for a moment and talk about love. Jesus states the 2 most important commandments in a conversation in Mark 12. It restates this idea of loving someone as you love yourself. And He's quoting the old testament commands to the jews. Nothing new here. This was always the requirement. Mark 12

28 And when one of the scribes came and heard them arguing, he recognized that He had answered them well and asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; 30 and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Mark 12:28 - 31

We all love to talk about secret deeper meanings or hidden beneath the surface deeper truth. Try this on for size.

The purpose of those two commands, for any honest person, is to drive us to our knees in utter bankrupt repentance.

I know in my deepest inner being that I haven't loved God with every fiber of my being for 10 seconds straight. Not once. The rich young ruler who heard this command and said to Jesus, all these things I have done from my

youth !? That's delusional. You have loved God continually with every fiber of your being, non stop. Get real.

The truth is, if that's the requirement, I'm hopelessly bankrupt.

The second great commandment is easier. Love your neighbor as yourself. Really? Again, be honest for a milli second. You've cherished your neighbor as yourself. According to what Paul just said to the Ephesians? *29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it,*

The reality is pretty horrible. I do cherish and nourish my own flesh. Love my neighbor as myself. Get real. I like Jim Dunn, and I'm glad he's my neighbor, but the reality is, if nourishing and cherishing him like I do my own flesh is the requirement, I'm equally bankrupt on the easier of the two as I am on the first one.

Those two commandments are all the judge of all the ages needs to incarcerate every fallen human into hell forever. If I've got to choose between Jim Dunn or Jim Galli, on who gets cherished, it's going to be old number one, every time. I'm as bankrupt on the second as I am on the first.

Paul argues, your wife is your own flesh. Maybe you could nourish and cherish her, since there's a magical connection. The two are one flesh. It makes it so much less impossible. Somehow when I nourish and cherish her, it brings actual thriving to old number one. *He who loves his own wife loves himself. . .* God did that.

31 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great, but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

I was remembering a campaign of billboards and ads with the slogan; **Try Jesus**. Remember that? So I went on line to try to find out when that was a campaign and tryjesus dot com is current.

In our gimmicky free market world there are thousands of free trial period campaigns. Try our mattress for 6 months for free. Don't like it, call us up and we'll come and get it. Try our software package for free. Try our gymnasium for free. Take a Nissan Altima home for a weekend trial.

We're used to that. It's a gimmick. They know I'm too lazy and stupid to make them come back for their crummy mattress. Plus I'd be embarrassed when two thugs show up with a truck and look at me like, really dude? Really? The folks who write those gimmicks know they work.

It makes sense to our fallen blind lost world to try a marriage partner out for a free trial period. If they don't add something to the bottom line of the value package that is ME, no fault, no bonds, get rid of the person and try something else.

So it only makes sense to our world and culture to try Jesus. See if there's any value added to ME and if not, we'll dump him at the next exit. Jesus has to be a gain to my bottom line. Or not. No fault divorce, Jesus. Out you go if you don't supply value to ME ME ME.

Paul's metaphor of a marriage bond that has like properties with a Jesus bond is a direct comparison that works.

In God's design for marriage, there's no try out period. It's a contract that you never come back from.

31 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

There's no trial period. When you leave father and mother, you close that door behind you, and there's no going back. You choose a wife, wisely? That's a tough one when you're 19 or 20 years old. There's a lot going on at that age that limits wisdom.

God did that. He's definitely got a sense of humor. That's why He made

one super important rule. Find another christian. At 19 years old find a bride, close the door behind mom and pop, and cleave to this single person for the rest of your life. Very funny, God.

In the ancient world the parents who had perhaps a little more wisdom, one might hope, would choose a bride for you. My dad's parents, my paternal grandparents were an arranged marriage. And they were catholics. They were put together and there was nothing either of them could do about it. Make it work. Or not.

He was a drunk. She bought a commercial Singer sewing machine in the early 1920's and he almost killed her. But somehow she fed the family doing seamstress work. He did odd jobs when he was sober. My mom remembers him with an ever present Seven Up bottle with whatever alcohol he could get his hands on. They raised their own grapes on a trellis over the driveway. He made wine.

That was a hundred years ago in South San Francisco California. Was that better or worse than now, where there's no commitment at all. Some donor gets a girl pregnant and the kids grow up somehow with a mom working the drive up window at Burger King and no dad at all. No family structure. No nothing. Satan did that.

31 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

God's design for marriage is two people . . . all in. Looking back 40 plus years ago, compared to today, we were pretty gallant. We left mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, jobs, our home, behind in Southern Cal and moved to Carson City and ended up in Tonopah Nevada. *You are my wife . . . goodbye city life . . . green acres we are here.*

We were christians with a commitment to God's design. At 49 years we are thankful to God for His design and His provision for folks who hold on.

Now then, consider Paul's metaphor in the next verse;

32 This mystery is great, but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

Paul's comparison is that marriage is a commitment on the same level as being joined to Jesus. You don't try Jesus out. There's no trial period to see if you like having Jesus along as co-pilot. See if He adds anything to the value of YOU. It doesn't work that way.

He IS Lord. Period. Of everything. If He isn't Lord of you, that doesn't change His status. It only means you are in open rebellion with the Lord of everything that is. The Lord of your next breath.

And when you do make the connection, when you become His bride, there's no going back. He's driving and you're holding on for dear life. There's no trial period. He's in charge. You're all in, with Him, forever.

Paul brings that truth as a metaphor of our human marriages. It's leave mom and pop. And you're all in forever. No trials. No exit's. God's design for marriage is a grand design.

You may not be happy every day. But you've got a partner in whatever it is you find yourself in. And kids come. And they've got a solid mom and dad that they can take for granted. Not going anywhere. They're there for better or worse. Kids thrive with a real mom and a real dad. God did that.

Our partnership with our spouses has some things in common with our partnership with Jesus. Someone leads, the husband, and someone follows, the wife. Jesus leads His bride the church. He provides all that His bride needs. The husband provides a secure home, shelter and food. Security and love. Safety for wife and children. Everyone thrives.

Like our partnership with Jesus, it's all in, no exit possible. He says, I will never leave you nor will I ever forsake you. Once that connection is made,

by faith in Him, it lasts forever.

Jesus relationship with His church, with His bride, with His individual believers who have a one on one connection with Him, by His indwelling Holy Spirit, is a model for husbands and wives.

Paul finishes up in verse 33. Christian marriage is something the world can't have. It's above anything the world can experience. Which is why the world has abandoned God's design for marriage.

But for christians, one of life's great benefits and mysteries is marriage to a single partner for life. All in! No way out! For better or for worse, in sickness and in health, in poverty or plenty, for as long as ye both shall live.

33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

Husbands, love that wife. Wives, respect that husband. This is also by God's design. We're different by design. We need different things to thrive. Men need their wives to respect them. Maybe far fetched for some of us. Knuckleheads. But that's God's command for women. Respect him.

Women, you need love. Husbands, love your wife. It's what she needs. She's a very different animal than you are.

Pam likes to tease me because if I'm in the room when the hallmark movie gets all weepy touchy feely emotional, I often go find something else to do. Gag me with a stick. I'm interested in a good story. But I don't need to be manipulated. God definitely made you ladies different than us men.

33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

That's all there is to it. Not rocket science. All in for the duration. She needs some love. He needs some respect. Funny how well that works out.

Almost as if some Higher Power designed it. The blind world doesn't get it.