

APPLYING THE TRUTH AT HOME

Part 3

SPIRIT-FILLED HUSBANDS

Ephesians 5:25-33

Intro: We continue on this morning in the family section of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. After all that he had already written in the epistle about salvation, and then about our walk in the Lord, he could hardly have emphasized in any stronger way that, after we respond to the Lord personally, the place of first importance after that where we need to demonstrate the reality of our relationship to the Lord, is in the home! And, as we can see from reading the epistle, Paul did not just give some general instructions about how we are to obey the Lord at home, but he got very specific with Christian wives. And then, in our text for today, he got just as specific with Christian husbands. After this, he spoke to children in the family in chapter 6, and then to the fathers.

Only those wives, husbands, children, and fathers who know the Lord, can possibly measure up to these high, God-given standards. But it needs to be pointed out that these are God's standards for every home. The husbands and wives who are faced with the truth that we have here in Ephesians 5 and on into chapter 6, should be told that the only way they can measure up to what Paul has written, is by trusting the Lord for salvation first, and then trusting Him for the grace to live as He has said that we should live in our homes. Even King David, as he was expressing in Psalm 139 some of the wonderful truths he had learned about God, found it in his heart to say in verse 6, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." That is how we all ought to feel about everything that we read in the Bible. David meant that he couldn't grasp the wonderful truth that had been revealed to him about God, but he also could say this about the practical teaching that had been given to the Lord's people at that early date. God never intended any of us to obey His Word in our own strength. But He tells us what to do, and then He gives us the wisdom and the strength to do what He says. You and I are beginning to see and understand the glorious teaching of Scripture if we can say from the heart, with David, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." But we also need to say with the Apostle Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

Let me repeat: the Christian life is a supernatural life, a divine life. God

never intended for us to obey Him in our own strength. Isaiah 40:28-31 is another good passage for us to remember when we face the human impossibility of obeying the Lord. Most of you probably know these verses:

- 28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.
29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.
30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:
31 But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isa. 40:28-31).

Those are tremendous verses that we all should memorize. They teach us a truth that runs through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. It can be abbreviated with this statement: “I can’t, but He can.” This doesn’t mean that I find a comfortable chair, and go and sit down in it, and wait for the Lord to do my obedience for me. No, it doesn’t work that way. Quoting Paul’s letter to the church at Philippi again, remember what Paul wrote to those Philippian Christians in Philippians 2:12-13:

- 12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.
13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Even in the matters that we face every day, trials that come up that are frustrating to us, and often seem so meaningless, we fail to trust the Lord as we should. I have failed to trust the Lord this week as I should. We never get to the place where we can say to the Lord, “Lord, I can make it on my own now, but Lucille still needs your help.” The older I get, the more I realize that I desperately need the Lord’s help every day. And I need Him everywhere and all of the time. And you do too!

Soon after Lucille and I were married, we had the privilege of working with Jim Rayburn who was the founder and director of the Young Life Campaign, a ministry to high school young people. One day as I was listening to Jim speak to a bunch of high school kids, many of whom made no profession of having trusted the Lord as their Savior. But he was talking about how we need to learn to trust the Lord. He told about an

incident that took place between him and his little daughter. They were out in the woods, and came to a shallow stream where people were walk across the stream by stepping on the rocks which were just a little above the water, but they were wet with the stream flowing over them. His little daughter saw the people walking across the stream using the rocks, but Jim felt that he should hold her hand while they crossed the stream. However she want to do it by herself. So he let her try. She hadn't gone very far before she slipped off of one of the rocks, and fell into the stream. Jim helped her get up. I have forgotten if she was crying, but she probably was. But she told her Daddy, "You had better hold my hand because I might fall down again." He held her hand and they walked right across the stream. She slipped several times, but she didn't fall again because her Daddy held her by the hand so she couldn't fall.

I heard that story back in the mid 1940's and have never forgotten it. It is a perfect illustration of how we need, not to hold the Lord's hand, but to have Him holding us by the hand to keep us from falling in the slippery places of our lives.

Now let's see what Paul had to say to the Christian husbands about what their main responsibility was toward their wives.

I. "HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES" (Eph. 5:25).

It is really wonderful to see a couple fall in love, and want to get married, especially when both of them know and love the Lord. That is a picture of what God intended for a marriage to be. What the supreme court of the State of California did this past week is an abomination to the Lord, stating that two men may get married, or two woman can get married, and that that is just like a man and a woman getting married. And it bothers me about as much when I hear those who oppose same-sex marriages saying that historically that has not been considered marriage. That part is right, but that is not the main reason that same-sex marriages are wrong. They are wrong because it is contrary to what God had in mind at creation when he created a man and a woman and brought them together as husband and wife. And when we try to say that something else is a family and can be a home, we are going to have God to deal with. The teaching of evolution has so warped the minds of people today that they think that whatever you want to do, you ought to be able to go ahead and do it. We call this our rights. We have no rights that run contrary to the will of God. Evolution is a lie, and one of the worst things that the theory of

evolution does is to make people feel that they are not responsible to a living, sovereign, holy God Who Himself determines what is right and what is wrong, what is pleasing to Himself, and what is sin.

What is a non-Christian going to do with this command to husbands: “Husband, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.” That is a husband’s primary responsibility to His wife. But the standard is not mere human love. The standard for a husband’s love for his wife is the love that Christ had for the Church and gave Himself for it.

But do you know what I always tell married couples, or those who want to get married, about this command? I tell them that *there never has been a husband who has loved his wife like that! No husband has ever loved his wife that much. Why did the Holy Spirit direct the Apostle Paul to use the Lord’s love for His Church as the pattern for a husband’s love for his wife if nobody has ever been able to measure up to that example? I’ll tell you why by telling you what Jim Rayburn told me in our wedding ceremony. He said, “Dwight, remember that you cannot love Lucille too much.” God set the standard that high so that we husbands will always know that we still haven’t reach the goal.*

Now what responsibility does this place upon every husband? I hope every husband is listening to me now, and every prospective husband. This means that every husband needs to make a study of the love of God, the love that He and Christ have for you and me who are members of His body, the Church. There is no more amazing fact in all the world than the truth of God’s love for you and me, those of us, undeserving as we are to have our sins forgiven and to be joined in an eternal union with our precious Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The more we husbands know about the love of God, the better husbands we will be. Have you as a Christian ever had a time in your life with the Lord’s love for you has wavered in the slightest way? We all have to say “no.” The Lord’s love for us never grows, but our understanding of His love and our experience of His love grows the longer we know the Lord. And that is the way that our love for our wives ought to be.

But notice how Paul went on to speak of the effect of the love of God upon those of us who are in the Church in verses 26 and 27. God’s love does not stop when we are first saved. He continues to love us and to sanctify us with the object in mind, according to verse 27, “that He might

present” us “to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that” we “should be holy and without blemish.”

You know, it is always true that we all learn things about each other after we are married that we didn't know before. We learn that none of us is perfect. There are changes that need to be made in all of our lives. But on the basis of what Paul said here about the work of the love of God for His church being a sanctifying love, it seems to me that what Paul is saying here that if our wives are not as perfect as we would like for them to be, the fault may be that we do not love them, or have not loved them, like Christ loves His Church. Solomon said in Proverbs 10:12, “Love covereth all sin.” The Apostle Paul said, “Love never faileth.”

Husbands, think of God's love for you! Has His love for you ever wavered? How often have you gone back to Jeremiah 31:3 to meditate on it in connection with God's love for you? What does Jeremiah 31:3 have to say to us?

3 The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

You have heard me say many times that I am amazed that the Lord ever saved me, but I am just as amazed that He has kept me after saving me. Husbands, did you ever say that you are amazed that that wife of yours ever married you? But take a step further: Are you just as amazed that she has kept you? The Lord's love for us is everlasting. With Him this means that it never had a beginning, and it will never have an ending. But it also means that it never undergoes the slightest bit of a change. Our love for our wives had a beginning, as did her love for us. But it never should end, and the only way it should change is that it becomes stronger and more satisfying the longer we are together.

There is so much in these verses that it is hard to leave them behind, but let's move on. Husbands are not only to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her, but

II. HUSBANDS ARE TO LOVE THEIR WIVES AS THEY LOVE THEMSELVES (Eph. 5:28-32).

We hear a lot these day in the world about self-love, as something that we all need to learn. The Bible does not speak of self-love as something that we do not have, but need to acquire. It speaks of loving ourselves as

something that we do naturally. The love that we have for ourselves is something that we were born with. It is God-given. The tendency that we all have to protect ourselves is evidence of this. I don't put my hand in the fire because by nature I am inclined to protect myself from harm. I am inclined to eat the right kind of food, to get enough rest for my physical well-being because I have a love for myself. I don't step in front of a fast moving car, or jump out of a plane a thousand feet up in the air because I am naturally inclined to take care of myself. If this were not a part of our being, human life would not exist on the earth. We would all kill ourselves in one way or another.

Now there is nothing wrong with this unless this is all we are concerned about. What the Lord said was that we are to show the same concern for the safety or well-being of our neighbors that we show for ourselves. If we did there would be no murders. There would be no stealing. There would be no wars. There would be no adultery because that is not true love. But loving God is the first commandment, and then loving our neighbor as ourselves is second. And they must come in that order.

So a husband must love his wife as he loves himself. A husband and wife are joined together in such a way that "they two shall become one flesh" (Eph. 5:31). God joins a husband and wife together in such a way that when a husband loves his wife, he is actually loving himself. He provides for her in the same way he provides for himself. He protects her in the same way that he protects himself from all harm. If necessary he would give his life to protect hers. This is a very wonderful picture of marriage. There is no greater relationship, no more intimate relationship, no more enduring relationship, than the relationship between a husband and wife. And so a man who cares for his wife is caring for himself because he and his wife are one.

This, too, is a picture of a Christian's relationship to Christ. We are one with Him and in Him. We see this at the Cross. He died, but He died for us. We see this in daily life; "He careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:7).

Those of us who have been studying our Lord's prayer in John 17 have seen this truth of our union with Christ, and even with God our Father several times in His prayer. For example, see vv. 20-23:

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in

thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (John 17:20-23).

God and Christ do not make Themselves one; They are one. We do not make ourselves in the Church one with Christ; we are one. In marriage a husband and wife do not make themselves one flesh; they are one. And as Christ loves His church, so husbands are to love their wives. And as Christ cares for His church because He loves His Church, His Body, so husbands are to care for their wives because they love their wives. And as the love of Christ has a sanctifying, purifying effect upon His Bride, His Church, so the love a husband has for his wife has a sanctifying and purifying effect upon his wife.

Concl: Paul's conclusion to the whole matter: read Eph. 5:33.