Ephesians 5:22-33

The Husband Who Loves Sacrificially

Sermon final

On the night when our Lord was betrayed, he rose from His seat at the last supper, and He girded Himself as a household slave (the lowest position of the household), and kneeled down, and began to wash the disciples feet. Peter didn't like that! That made no sense to him…that's not what the leader of the household does! Even worse, it wasn't what King's do! Messiahs don't wash feet…they have their feet washed! But Jesus told him… "you have no part with me unless you let me serve you and wash your feet." ***Who was the leader and who was the one in submission when Jesus, as a household slave, washed the feet of Peter? Jesus was leading, but Peter didn't like the way Jesus was leading, but as His leader, Peter submitted, and Jesus washed Peters feet.*** Jesus set an example for the disciples and He set an example for husbands who love their wives sacrificially.

On another occasion, Jesus told Peter that the Son of Man would be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners and would be put to death. Peter didn't like that plan either! Messiah's don't get crucified, Messiah's reign! Who was leading when Jesus went to the cross? When you look at the cross what do you see? Do you see defeat or victory? For those who crucified Him, Jesus hanging on the cross was the epitome of weakness and defeat. Who wants to follow a defeated, crucified, king?! He was mocked, He was spit on…and they ridiculed Him, "If you're the Messiah, the leader we are looking for…come down from the cross!" Who wants to follow a weak, bloody, defeated, pseudo-king? But they "knew not what they were saying!" For those of us who have received the greatest gift ever known to man through the cross we don't see defeat we see the greatest victory of all time and we see what a real Shepherd does…He lays down His life for the sheep that follow Him.

When Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, there was no mistaking who the leader was in the room. When we look back at Jesus on the cross, we have no doubt who the real leader was at the scene of His crucifixion. Jesus has forever changed what real leadership looks like.

The Ephesian Christians hearing this household code read out loud to them (that's what Paul is writing here in 5:21-6:9) would have heard some very common features. But what really stands out is the unique features. For the wife listening on, Paul describes her role in the home in a way that was very common to the Graeco-Roman culture. **"wives submit to your own husbands" (v.22). "For the husband is the head of the wife" (v.23**). Headship implies authority and leadership. Also in **v.33 – "let the wife see that she respects her**

husband". So the wife is to respect and to follow the lead of her husband who is the head/the authority of the home. Yes…this is right and very common to any ancient household code. But her reason for submission has changed radically, because Jesus is now the ultimate leader of the home. She no longer follows the lead of her husband simply out of respect or propriety. She isn't being asked to do it because it was the cultural norm, or because the order was good for the greater good of society. She isn't even asked to submit for the sake of her husband primarily. It is "**out of reverence for Christ" (v.21**) that she submits to her husband. When she submits it is **"as to the Lord" (v.22).** Jesus is her Lord, and He has come into the home, and Jesus is asking her to submit to her husband, and therefore she submits primarily for Jesus' sake. Also, she now has an example to emulate - she takes her example of submission from the church that submits to Jesus – "**as the church submits to Christ so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands". (v.24).** It takes GREAT FAITH in God's sovereign protection over your life to be willing to follow the lead of a man who is imperfect! Lorrie told me a couple weeks ago, "I wish you would have talked about Sarah." When Sarah obeyed the will of Abraham to lie to Pharaoh and say that she was his sister…God protected her! I think Lorrie takes great comfort in this because she knows how her husband can make foolish and sloppy plans! Submission takes great faith in the Sovereign protection of God! Wives you need to know that Jesus will protect you from every disastrous decision or sinful impulse that your husband may have. He will always honor your obedience to Him.

When I have come to Lorrie and told her with full honesty and integrity, "I prayed about this decision, and I know you want to go a different direction with this decision, but I feel like the Lord is leading us to go THIS WAY." I better have considered what is best for her and for my family! And when I make a decision that goes against Lorrie's better judgment…she takes great comfort in a God who protected Sarah when Abrahams plans went south.

Headship means taking initiative to act and do what is necessary after prayerfully considering what is best for those whom you lead and it is decisive. It takes great faith in a God who is able to Sovereignly direct you to make the right decision. People's lives have been entrusted to you in the home men. This is a glorious and terrifying calling. We should tremble before God at the appointment to lead our home and plea with Him to guide us as we guide them. We should always be willing to be the first one to take the initiative to lay down our lives as Jesus modeled for us with His headship.

As the Ephesians Christians listened on to the reading of this letter. What would have really struck them would have been Paul's words to the husbands. That the husband was the head of the home was not knew…but that the husband was the head, **"*even as Christ* is head of the church" (v.23)** was a radical new concept. That the husband was to **"love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her" (v.25)** was a radical new concept that was foreign to

ancient norms. Headship was not a new thing, but headship defined as a Husband Who Loves Sacrificially…as Jesus who gave Himself for His bride, the church. That was new.

Last week we looked at Jesus and His Bride and the way in which Jesus loved His bride. This morning I want to look at Headship within the home for the husband. There are ways that the husbands role as "head" is very similar to the way that Jesus is the "head" of the church. This letter points to the similarities in the way that Paul describes Jesus as the head in this letter, and here in vv.28-29 Paul gives the two primary ways that a husband is to take the initiative as head to love his wife sacrificially. Finally, we'll ask the question, what motive should be at the front of a husband's mind when they lay down their lives sacrificially in their homes.

One more word before we dig in…leadership and headship has much to do with "taking the initiative" to lead. It isn't passive. It takes ownership for the responsibility of the marriage and home. What I see in this passage is that the two primary ways a husband takes initiative to lead is to sacrificially protect and sacrificially provide. The heart posture is loving sacrifice, and the rhythms of headship are protection and provision. He takes initiative…that doesn't mean the wife doesn't provide and protect. Beware of mama bear! It doesn't mean the wife doesn't work…she works! She really works hard whether in the home or outside of the home. What it does mean is that the husband leads the decisively and sacrificially with the rhythms of protection and provision in the home.

1. The Husband Who Loves Sacrificially takes the Initiative to Protect His Wife

Now I get the idea of Headship as "protection" from the word "cherish" in v.29 – "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it". Jesus protects His church as "head".

The word "cherish" is used to speak of a mother bird who protects her eggs by keeping them warm. She places them in a nest far away as possible from predators. She uses her own body to shield the eggs and to keep them warm. Without their mother, the eggs would be exposed to the elements and to predators. Don't mess with mama bear – she becomes fierce. The husband is to be a fierce protector of his wife. Jesus is a fierce protector of His bride, the church. His headship is seen in the initiative He took as head over every defeated spiritual enemy of the church (every rule, authority, power, dominion) have been placed under the authority of Jesus as head:

> **And he [the Father] put all things under his feet [that is, rule, authority, power, dominion] and gave him as head [same word] over all things to the church [for the benefit of the church – NLT] (Eph. 1:22)**

Headship for Jesus is described in terms of protection of the church from the devil. The gates of hell will not prevail against the church…because Jesus has secured victory over the devil.

So also, as head of the home, husbands are to protect their wives as Christ does the church. This means we are to take the initiative to protect our wives so as to prevent anything that would harm her physically, emotionally, or spiritually. This could mean a physical invader, but it will most often mean a life of prayer, where you fight the real enemy, the devil and the flesh, on your hands and knees for your wife and with the sword of the Spirit. Paul is going to show that our enemy the devil is defeated when we wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (6:17). Jesus patiently, consistently, perseveringly washes His wayward bride, the church with the Words of God…so too husbands are to protect the heart and minds of their wives with the Scriptures. Words of life, of hope, of truth, of peace, of forgiveness, of grace and mercy…the promises of God…the final victory of Jesus! the words of the gospel that we so often need to protect us from the onslaught of condemnation from the devil.

There is nothing passive about protection. It is proactive and it is reactive. Here is where we as men can fail…when our wife is being attacked physically, emotionally, spiritually…rather than standing up and protecting her, we become passive, we see it as an inconvenience, we take it personally, and we do nothing, or worse, we react in the flesh. It's bloody when you enter into the spiritual war that women face today! It isn't easy being a woman in this cold world! The devil loves to devour women created in God's image. Husbands need to get on their knees and fight for their wives. This may mean ruined weekend plans and assuming the role of a household slave. It means praying for your wife when she is tired and needs strength. It means taking care of the kids so that she can get healthy when she's sick. It means sharing with her words of hope, encouragement, or affirmation when she doubts your love, or even God's love for her. It means waiting patiently for the right time to engage in the battle. This may mean opening up the Word of God when you're tired, not as a weapon against her, but as words that will wash over her. It may mean simply listening to her as she shares the pain she is going through. It could mean a lot of things…headship means taking the initiative to be the first to protect your wife.

2. The Husband Who Loves Sacrificially Provides for His Wife

There is another passage where Jesus is spoken of as head in Ephesians. In Ephesians 4:15 Jesus is referred to as "head" but in that passage headship is defined in terms of provision where Jesus is the source and the church is the recipient of all that He pours into it. Remember the bucket analogy? As head, Jesus pours into the church the spiritual gifts needed to grow in unity, stability, and love. Men, as head, you are to be a source of provision for your wives. Marriage for men means a life of providing for the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of your wife, as you are able. She needs Jesus far more than you…and one of the best things a husband can do is point his wife to Jesus…but Husbands are also, as they are able, to be a source of provision for their wives.

I see provision in v.29 in the word "nourish". The word "nourish" speaks of provision. In the Greek version of the OT the word is used of Joseph's provision of food for his brothers. In 6:4 it is used of fathers who provide for their children the discipline and instruction of the Lord that they need.

So husbands, as the head, are to be filled first by God…every single day so that they might spill out onto their families – loving, spiritual, emotional, and physical provision for their wives, discipline and instruction for their children. Husbands have nothing to spill out if you haven't first been poured into by Jesus. So the call to marriage for a man is a call to a deep relationship with God from whom we receive all we need. Jesus said, "unless you abide in me you can do nothing!" I have nothing to provide but from Jesus! Jesus said, "unless you abide in me you can do nothing!" I have nothing to provide but from Jesus! Men, the call to headship in your home is a call to a deep and abiding relationship with Jesus. The calling of a husband is to daily "receive, enjoy, and then supply to our wives and children the love of God in Christ unto the glory of God". Husbands, how are you doing in your relationship with Jesus? Are you daily being poured into by Him? Do you have accountability and brothers around you that God uses to pour into you? Are you in the Word daily…your food, your nourishment that God uses to nourish others?

Provision also means a call to work…you lay down your life for her daily when you do everything you can to provide, as you are able. Sometimes this means delegating responsibility, but if your family has not been provided for you are to be the one who is most concerned and the one who prayerfully takes the initiative to provide what is needed physically, emotionally, and spiritually in the home.

Provision implies knowing the needs of your family. Headship means knowing those you lead well…knowing their needs and being willing to do all you are able to provide for those needs. We can get so focused on tasks before us that we forget about the needs of our wives and children! Husbands, have you asked your wife lately what she needs from you? Do you have a pulse on the needs of your children? If I were to ask you, "what does your family need prayer for?" Could you give me an immediate answer? A head who provides is a head who knows those he leads well.

3. The Husband Who Loves Sacrificially Has a Glorious Goal in Mind

Jesus had a goal in mind which is described in Heb. 12 as a "joy set before Him" when He suffered and sacrificed Himself – the final presentation of the church to Himself in splendor (v.27). All that He is doing in protecting and providing for the church is to get us to that goal. This is the joy of Jesus – headship joyfully sacrifices in the present for a future glorious vision in which we put our hope.

No sacrifice is pleasant…it's painful in the moment…but when a seed dies it yields great fruit. So we must die daily for the sake of the fruit that will come. What fruit does a husband look forward to, so that he joyfully sacrifices in the present?

Two things in our text as we close:

First, husbands joyfully sacrifice themselves with the goal in mind of a deeper, intimacy in marriage. If you care nothing about this…you need to get right with the Lord. I know there are men that are so far gone that they care NOTHING about the vision of glorious oneness that God has for marriage. We are "one flesh" but we can always experience a greater oneness. This should be at the forefront of your minds when you sacrifice brothers for your wife. When you pray, when you put her first, when you lay down your rights, when you let "your opinion" go. When you forsake your comfort for her comfort. Whenever you sacrifice in small ways and in massive ways, you are doing it for a greater intimacy and oneness in your marriage. Paul says, "he who loves his wife loves himself". You "nourish and cherish your own body"…you don't "hate your own body"…when you need to sleep, you sleep. When you have a cut, you bandage it. Take that mentality and apply it to your marriage…and do it for the joy of oneness and intimacy that will be the result.

You have to understand something about Christian marriage – you are now one flesh so that her pain is your pain, her joy is your joy…there is no getting around this and praise God for it! Because there is no other person on earth that you can be this close to! "It is NOT GOOD FOR MAN TO BE ALONE!" We crave intimacy and companionship…but are we willing to pay the price for it? A husband who sacrifices for his wife, a wife who respects and follows the lead of her husband. Intimacy and oneness is cultivated through the love and respect that husbands and wives show one another. It's worth dying for!

Secondly, (and more importantly) husbands joyfully sacrifice themselves for their wives because they get to play a very limited, but very real role of their Savior who died for them. You die because Jesus died for you! And when you love your wife sacrificially, your role in marriage becomes a beautiful parable to the world of the love of Jesus for His bride the church. That's humbling, it's a HUGE honor, and it will cost you and I everything in our marriages. God help us to not ruin the picture that God is seeking to display of the oneness between Christ and the church.

I want to speak personally…this is a pursuit of mine now for about 20 years and I have failed miserably at everything I have shared…but I'm way better than I once was. Men we fail at this…and we have a Great Savior who has paid for our failures. God doesn't love or accept you based on how perfect of a husband or father you are…He loves you and is for you irregardless of your faithfulness. That's the gospel. Wives, be patient with your

husbands…we are not perfect. Husbands be patient with your wives…they are not perfect either.

But I want to say this…the times when I've been willing to sacrifice for my wife. The times when I've shown her that I care and demonstrated the kind of husband I want to be…there is always a sacrifice on my part…but the joy of the intimacy in my marriage and the oneness that results from me being who God calls me to be FAR OUTWEIGHS the sacrifice. Oneness in marriage, close, intimate, deep marriage…where my wife feels cared for, loved for, safe…it's not always there…I fail…but when it is there the joy far outweighs the sacrifice. This is a worthy goal…it was a worthy goal for Jesus – He gave Himself for a future day of eternal intimacy with His bride, the church. Nothing hindering our intimate fellowship with Him…that was worth dying for. I want to work towards the goal of a wife who is blessed, and cared for, and deeply loved, and deeply considered, where I find my joy IN her joy and not at the EXPENSE of her joy…and then she can with integrity and honesty say, "I feel very loved by the head of my home. I see Jesus when I look at him."