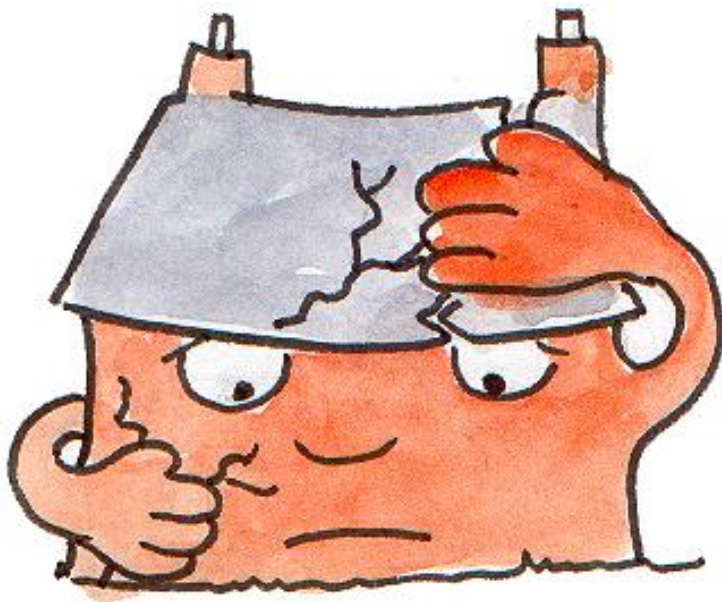


EPHESIANS: CHRIST IN THE HOME



*A series of sermons on the role of wives,
husbands, parents, children, masters
and slaves*

*by
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Christ In The Home - Chapter 1

"The Christian Wife"

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Ephesians 5:22-24

1. **WHY Does She Submit? (verses 22-23)**
 - a. Lordship (verse 22)
 - b. Headship (verse 23)
2. **HOW Does She Submit? (verse 24)**
 - a. Ecclesiastically (verse 24a)
 - b. Extensively (verse 24b)

Chapter 5 of Ephesians and we begin, as I've been announcing, a kind of sub-series within our series here in this epistle. I don't want to unnecessarily lengthen out our studies in this little book, but I feel it is important that we don't scour over quickly anything that is important within the word of God. Therefore we are entering in this evening to a passage that deals with 'Christ in the Home' - or at least that's what I have entitled it - how we relate within the home to the relationship that we have now come into in the Lord Jesus Christ, with those that we relate to within our families and indeed within our friends. As we'll see, as this chapter goes on, it also deals with the relationship of parents to children and vice versa, and also the relation between bosses and those that serve them, servants and masters. So we see the immense practicality of this little book before us, so I don't want to skip over anything needlessly - so we're going in, if you like, to a new series tonight looking at 'Christ in the Home'. In the weeks that lie ahead we will be looking also at the armour of God in chapter 6 - and I don't want to deal with all those facets of that armour in one week, we're going to take our time as we go through each individual piece of armour. It'll take us over Christmas, not too much hopefully, but we want to deal with what God is saying to us through His word.

So let's begin, and we'll read from verse 21 - although our study tonight will incorporate verses 22 to 24 we need to read, I feel, verse 21 to get the flow of the passage. Verse 21: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" - we dealt last week with the fullness of the spirit, and there were many results and evidences that you are filled with the Spirit that we found in these last verses, and the third of those, if you look at your sheet if you still have it, was submitting unto other people. From there Paul now enters into this discourse on Christ in the home: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband".

We've said many times that chapters 1 to 3 of this epistle deal with doctrine. Now we can't make a clear-cut definition like that, but it is in a general sense we say it, that the first three chapters deal with doctrine and the next three chapters, 4 to 6, deal with duty - what we should do, all the practicalities of our beliefs

incorporated in the way that we behave as children of the light. Therefore we are coming into an extremely practical section of the word of God in this second section to do with duty. And it seems, as I've already said, that we're coming into a new section, but although it's new in itself it's still linked to that verse 21 that we've already read, dealing with the fullness of the Spirit: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God". Therefore if we are submitting ourselves in such a way it will filter into the home life.

Martin Luther, the great father of the Reformation, called this passage of Scripture - 500 years ago - 'The house table of the word of God', in other words this is where the word of God comes home. It's set upon the kitchen table, it's immensely practical, it kicks in within our lives day-by-day within the home. As we read through this passage we see that Paul is now talking about subjection to one another in the family relationships that we have - but if we were to go into this passage without realising the connection that it has to the words that come before it, we'd be foolish. We dealt last week with the fullness of the spirit, and that is the key, that's the key, that indeed is the key of all Christian life - the fullness of the Spirit - and if we have the fullness of the Spirit, we can be sure that the home life will be intact and it will be the way God wanted it to be in the first place. Therefore in chapter 5 and verse 22, right through to chapter 6 and verse 9, Paul cites three specific areas in the Christian home where submission is the will of God - as Luther said, 'the table duties' of the child of God at home.

We read of the relationship between wives and husbands - what we'll be looking at this week and next, chapter 5 verses 22 to 33 - the verses we read this evening. Then in chapter 6 verses 1 to 4, look down at it, we find the relationship between children and parents - very topical in the age in which we live. And then finally, chapter 6 verses 5 to 9, we read about the relationships of submission between slaves and masters. As I look at this passage of Scripture it brings to my heart and mind how we ought never ever in this world - the contemporary world, the modern world that we live in - never to underestimate the impact of the Christian family upon a pagan, irreligious, godless world. Never underestimate it! Just as the church, tattered and broken as it may be, that we've been studying in the weeks that have gone by, just as it is worn and lukewarm, just as it is going through trials and tribulations that perhaps it has never gone through before in these last of the last days, it is still God's chosen method to work through. And so in the home, even though it's attacked from every side, every angle: religious, political, cultural, every single angle - it is still God's way for a man and a woman and for boys and girls to be together. Never underestimate the impact that the Christian family can have on a pagan world.

Now, we have to enter this study tonight - we're looking at Christian wives - with care, not just because my wife and your wives are here and they're listening to everything we're saying, but in the world in which we are in there are two reasons why we need to be careful as we handle verses 22 to 24. The first reason we need to take care is that it teaches a divinely given order in marriage, and we are declaring tonight that it is from God - and in this world in which we live when you declare that anything is from God it is sneered upon. If it is from the Bible it's laughed at, but to actually say that these old worn pages - as the world sees it - is God's council and oracles for the way a modern age should live, will be laughed at. And so as we come upon these verses we need to realise that that is the reaction that we will get from this modern world. And also for the fact that these verses mention the word 'submit' - and in our age of liberation it seems that in the minds of modernists and academics that the word 'submit' is outdated, it's old-fashioned. It conjures up within their minds the idea of oppression, of dominance, of being trodden down - and therefore as we enter into such a study we need to be ready and prepared to be lambasted by a modern society, and even by a modernistic church that misunderstands what we say when we speak of submission. We need to also realise that not only do we have a society that misunderstands what we are saying, but we live today in a politically correct society that perfectly understands what we are saying, but rejects it because it's of God.

The second reason we have to beware is the fact that these three verses that we're looking at tonight have been the most abused, perhaps, and perverted by sinful men within the church of Jesus Christ. You see, we

need to walk a fine line in these verses, we need to be very careful that on the one hand we are not compromising the word of God, yet on the other hand we are not falling over into legalistic Pharisaism. One writer who had experience himself as a pastor says this: 'God's holy word in the hands of a religious fool can do immense harm. I have seen couch potatoes who ordered their wives and children around like the Grand Sultan of Morocco - adulterous men, with the domestic ethics of Jabba the Hut, who cow their wives around with Bible verses about submission - insecure men whose wives do not dare go to the grocery store without permission'. It's because of such men that some, even within the church, have thrown out these verses from their Bible.

Much of the problem within marriage, and even Christian marriage, today comes from these two faults: either a blatant disregard of these verses (and any biblical truth with regards to Christian wives, or Christian husbands and Christian marriage) - on the one hand those who throw the baby out with the bath water, and on the other hand there is a great attack by those who hijack these truths for themselves. Ignorant, arrogant, egotistic men - who, for self-promotion and thrill, batter their wives into the ground. All biblical truth with regards to headship within the word of God teach order, that is important. There are roles within life, in God. There are roles within the church of Jesus Christ, and roles within marriage and in the family home. But that order, we must never neglect to find, is ordered equality between men and women. The difference between that ordered equality is order itself - in other words, men and women in the sight of God are all equal. They are human beings, they are immortal souls, they are each priceless in the sight of God - but their order is not the same. There's a difference - and this is where the world, and often the church, gets confused - there's no superiority or, indeed, inferiority but there is order. In other words, there are those that are first, and there are those that are second.

Now within the society that Paul was writing to, in the city of Ephesus, it was within the bounds of the Roman Empire, and we need to understand the cultural backdrop that there was there. A woman within that society was unimportant, they had no authority in the home, the only duties that they had were preparing food and bearing children. Men could do as they pleased within the home in Rome. But a Christian home - a home that was now coming on the scene through Paul and the preaching of the Gospel, and these apostles within the whole of the Roman Empire - this was a new thing, this was a new man, a new people that we were learning in weeks gone by, a new nation of God. There was something revolutionary about the Christian home, because the Christian home was where a husband and a wife were united in loving fellowship - and that was a concept unknown to the Romans. Believe it or not, actually within the New Testament Scriptures - as the oracles of God are revealed in Christ and the apostles doctrine within the New Testament - you find the elevation of women to a position of honour, respect and dignity which was a product alone, not of the women's liberation movement, but the product of Christ and Christianity. It came through Christ. If you want proof of that you only need to look at the Middle East at this moment, and see the religions that there are there - particularly Islam - that suppresses and, indeed, oppresses women. No regard for them at all, they are not equal.

Now as we look at this passage of Scripture, verses 18 to 21 have to be noted for I said to you in weeks gone by that these verses are one long sentence, and indeed we are still in that one long sentence. Verse 18 to 21 are dealing with the fullness of the Spirit as we've already said, and now we're coming into this passage about Christ in the home and the thought is - in the one, same sentence - that to be filled with the Spirit of the Living God, to be full of the third Person of the blessed Trinity, will bring harmony in the home. That harmony will be seen in the Christian life. She is described in verse 22 as one who submits to her husband as unto the Lord. And the question in our age, and indeed within a modern church is: why does she submit?

Our first point: why should she do it? We have been reading already in this epistle, and studying in great detail, that believers are all one in Christ - there is no doubt about that, all the walls of partition have fallen down. But as that has happened we ought not to make the error that all relationships, earthly speaking and in

worldly capacities, are now eliminated - they clearly aren't. There are still men and women, there are still masters and slaves, there are still children and parents - and therefore, although we are all one in Christ, we still must respect the various types of authority and government which God has instituted and ordained. Indeed, if you think about it for moment, every well-ordered society rests on two supporting pillars. There is authority - and if there is authority, for that society to work and not break into chaos and anarchy, there must be submission and subjection to that authority. And that is why we see anarchy and chaos within our own nation and, indeed, within the nations across the world - there may be authority, but there is no submission to it. And there may not be any submission to any authority, and yet at times in our own land there is no authority at all. There must be those who exercise authority, there must be also those who submit to authority - and the reason for that is that it is a God-given order. Now that must be understood before we go any further into talking about the relationship between a Christian wife and a Christian husband, and parents and children, and masters and slaves, we need to lay the foundation that this truth is of God and it's found in the very Godhead itself!

Turn with me 1 Corinthians 11 - now we don't have time to go into the whole teaching regarding the head-covering this evening, but it is related to the subject of headship. And as Paul begins his discourse in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, he mentions how there is order within the Godhead - 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 3: 'But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God' - order in the Godhead. The head of Christ is God, and there we lay the foundation right away that this is not something that some chauvinistic theologian with a long beard, who is dated and out of date, has thought up - that Paul the apostle has conjured out of nowhere - this order that is found within the family home, within the church of Jesus Christ, is one that you find in the Trinity of God Himself. We see it in governments around us - now, we are taught within the word of God, no matter what loyalists or republicans say, the word of God says that we are to obey and submit to the government - it is ordained by God. I grant you, it is evil, very evil, but if you can obey the government without denying or disobeying the Lord - God says we ought to obey them that have the rule over us. In fact, within the word of God, it seems to me that bad government seems better to God than no government at all. The absence of government within a land brings anarchy and chaos, and no society can survive without it.

The home is very similar. You see, Paul is saying in these verses [that] there must be a head in the home, and there must be obedience to that head - there you have it: authority and subjection. Without those two pillars there will be anarchy and chaos - there must be a head in the home and there must be those who are obedient to the head. In the book of Genesis and the first few chapters you will note that God indicated the man is the head at creation, it was from the very beginning, before the fall. You will note also - as Paul mentions on other occasions - that the man was created first, and the woman was created for the man. And by the man being created first, he was placed in a position of authority and the woman placed in a position of submission. Now that's clear - it's not very popular, it's not very 'PC' or fashionable, but that is the word of God, that's what we find God has revealed to us - and as the children of God it doesn't matter, I say again, it doesn't matter what the world does, we ought to obey God rather than men! But that relationship of authority and submission never, ever, ever implies inferiority. And that is why the world and liberal Christians and theologians would have you believe it implies inferiority, because they want to destroy this beautiful and essential doctrine from the word of God. Now think about it for a moment: this doctrine cannot mean inferiority! The foundation of the doctrine, as we read in 1 Corinthians 11 verse 3, is found in the Godhead - the Lord Jesus Christ is subject to the Father, but in no way is He inferior to Him! Of course He isn't! But yet, within that Godhead, there is order. And the woman is not inferior to the man - in fact, in some respects, some would say that she is superior in her devotedness, in her sympathy, in her diligence and heroic endurance.

Verse 21 and 22 should be read like this, I believe: 'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God, wives unto your own husbands, husbands loving your wives'. In verse 22 in the Greek the word 'submit' is

not found, for we are carrying on - at least Paul is carrying on in his long Greek sentence from verse 21: 'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God, wives unto your own husbands, husbands loving your wives'. And the fact that it is not mentioned, is the fact that it is inferred - I'll read it again with the inference: 'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God, wives submitting unto your own husbands, husbands submitting unto your own wives, loving them'. The idea is mutual, it is mutual submission - but submission in different ways. The submission of the woman is to be found within verse 22, submitting unto your husband as unto the Lord for he is your head, verse 23, even as Christ is the head of the church and the Saviour of the body. Verse 25 we find the husband's submission, he is to submit in love to his wife, giving himself for her! And if that's not submission, what is? So men, don't get on your high-horse - it is mutual, it is both parties, and in a sense it is right when we say this expression: 'They would do anything for each other'. We can 'Christianise' it: 'They would do anything for each other in the Lord'!

The Lord taught His disciples, did He not, to cease from throwing their weight around - not any longer to seek to be greater than another, and in fact you will note as you read the New Testament that they failed many times to understand that great truth. Even at the Last Supper, before the Lord would die, they were still arguing about who would be the greatest among them. And the Lord had to get up and wash their feet to teach them that the greatest among them is he that serveth! In other words, the one with authority builds other people up. You see, that was the difference between our Lord and the Pharisees, the Pharisees built their own authority up in the eyes of men to make themselves more important - but our treatise from the word of God, our remit, our agenda as believers, walking in Christ and meant to have the mind of Christ, is to esteem others better than ourselves! By nature we want to promote self, but verse 21 shows us that the fullness of the Spirit enables us to submit.

Now I want you to remember - and this is extremely important - that this passage of Scripture Paul is writing to believers, never forget that in these epistles. Paul is writing to believers, he is speaking of the Christian home, he's not speaking of your neighbours that aren't saved, he is not speaking of the world around us - although marriage is important for them - he is talking, if you look at the passage, of those who are in the Lord. He is talking of a Christ-pleasing home - don't get it in your mind for one moment that Paul is telling a woman to submit to the abuse of an unbelieving husband, don't have the idea that he is telling a woman to be silent to a dictating, legalistic prude who behaves like a Christian Stalin - that is not what Paul, nor the Holy Spirit is saying! But note that Paul is speaking to purely believing couples who are seeking to please the Lord and walk in His ways. That's important.

What secondly is important is also that this is not an exhaustive discourse on marriage. Paul gives no directive to widows who are left on their own, Paul doesn't speak of the one parent family that we have inherited in our society, because they were very rare in that day. He doesn't speak of domestic violence or wife battering because, as far as men were concerned probably in those days, they closed a blind eye to it all. He doesn't tell us what to do in the case of unwanted divorce, or the dysfunctional family that we have in this great century that we have entered into. But what Paul is speaking of here is not a cure for the circumstances that we find in the world and also flowing into the church, but he speaks of a prevention, of how married couples, two married Christians, ought to avoid [problems] in the home.

Now, in light of that, the first reason why you should submit as a wife is lordship, verse 22: '...as unto the Lord'. Submit yourselves unto your husbands as unto the Lord - now some men that you might read could be classed as chauvinists and say that the husband is like the Lord, and he's to be treated like the Lord, and some of you husbands might like to be treated that way! But that is not what Paul is meaning here, what he is saying is: submission is a duty to the Lord. It's as if you are doing it for the Lord, doing all things as unto the Lord! So you are submitting to your husband as unto the Lord. The inference is that if you are woman who has submitted to the lordship of Christ in your life, you'll have no difficulty submitting to a godly husband - no problem! If Christ is the Lord of your life, in submitting to your husband you would be submitting to the

authority of the Lord Himself - if...if...he is behaving as unto the Lord! Now mark that, men! If she has to treat you as unto the Lord, you ought to treat her as unto the Lord - and we will look at this next week - as Christ treated the church and gave Himself for her! And if he is a godly man, and she is a submissive [wife] there'll be few arguments in the home. There'll be little or no reluctance or attitude of rebellion.

Now, I really don't want you to misunderstand tonight - this doctrine is not teaching that she has to become a slave to her husband. It's teaching that the husband must first submit to Christ, and if he is submitting to Christ then there is no reason why a woman who is submitted to Christ also ought not to be able to submit to her husband - do you see the thought? If both are living under the lordship of Christ there will be harmony in the home. And her attitude is to see her husband as God's divinely appointed head, the one who He has placed in authority, who represents the rule of God in the home - and she is to accept his decisions as best, as he walks unto the Lord. Now that doesn't mean there's to be no discussion between the husband and the wife, indeed he should listen to her counsel! It doesn't mean that the husband can't leave responsibilities in the hands of a trusted wife. I want you to see this: that this is not a dictatorship, this is mutual respect within the happy Christian home! If it is happy it will be built upon that foundation of mutual respect.

Now the question, therefore, that comes from this point of lordship is: do we cultivate our walk with God in our marriage? And this convicts us all - not just in our own personal lives, but as a couple, as a family - do we seek to walk with God, for the lordship of Christ, as in our own personal life, must be cultivated in marriage also. That's why Paul tells us that a Christian should never marry a non-Christian, you should never be unequally yoked with an unbeliever - and that verse is not talking about marriage, by the way. It's talking about every association that compromises you - that can be business, that can be church life, that can be a religious order, that can be anything under the sun where light cannot have fellowship with darkness, nor God or Christ with Belial. Young Christian, it's not just marrying a non-Christian, but the yoke - as we looked at in a Gospel meeting not so long ago - was something that went on two oxen, and there was a stronger one and there was a weaker one, and I believe that you can be unequally yoked if you seek a relationship with a carnal Christian. I believe there is no difference, for that carnal Christian - you will be sure - will pull you down. Warren Wiersbe says: 'Such a home invites civil war from the beginning'.

This submission to the lordship of Christ must begin in marriage, but I believe it must begin far, far before that! Before you're even, perhaps, praying or thinking about marriage, you must be praying that if you enter into a relationship with a girl or a fellow that there will be that submission there to the lordship of Christ. And if you're going with someone, before you're married with the prayer of God and the word of God, [make sure] that you start building a foundation - for if you enter into marriage with a bad foundation, sins committed before marriage have a bad habit of being carried into marriage and causing problems. William Culbertson, the ex-president of Moody Bible Institute, warned of the sad consequences of forgiven sin - read the life of David and you'll see those. His son rebelled against him, his kingdom was in chaos, the illegitimate child died. Oh, we see from Psalm 51 that his sin was forgiven and God saw grace upon him and lavished it in forgiveness, but there were consequences.

The second reason why she ought to submit, and why you wives ought to submit is headship. It's the reason given in verse 23, not only '...as unto the Lord', but, '...For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body'. Her husband, your husband, is the head and the head has the sense of the head in the body, but also the sense of the head as a leader, as the spokesperson, as the person that will be responsible at the judgement seat of Christ.

Paul says it's the same relationship between Christ and the church, we have one head - Christ Jesus. Now the idea in 'head' is 'servant-leader', that is clearly the idea, for the illustration that Paul gives is Christ. And if we look at the life of Christ we find that, that He was the servant, you see Him taking the towel from round His waist and washing and drying the disciples feet. You see it, the servant-king of God! He is the head and,

verse 22 says, and also the Saviour of the body. That word 'Saviour' that you read there in the Greek can also be translated and has a meaning 'preserver'. So you see what Paul's saying, the husband is the head, he is the servant-leader, and he is also the preserver of the wife. As the head he loves her, he leads her, he guides her in godly ways and as the preserver he provides for her, protects her, and cares for her as saviour. Is the Lord Jesus Christ not our head? Was He not our head sacrificially? We read in Mark 10:45: 'For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister', or not to be served, but to serve, 'and to give his life a ransom for many'. Luke 22:26: 'He that is greatest among you', Jesus said, 'let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve'. The apostle told the elders - the oversight within the assembly - not to lord it over the brethren, isn't that right? Not to lord it over the church, and in the same way the husband as head, he is the head, he is not to lord it over his wife.

There are certain boundaries and they are God's boundaries, God gives them. As one writer has said: 'It can never be used selfishly', the doctrine of headship, 'and can never command what God forbids'. Your husband can never tell you to do something or inflict upon you something that God forbids, or forbid what God commands. A husband cannot instruct you to refrain from what is God's counsel. Headship is not unlimited, it is not unconditional but in connection with lordship it is a great responsibility. Women, maybe you thought I was going to be hard on you tonight, but this responsibility of men is awesome. The boundaries that they have to work within, they have the greater judgement - James 3:1, 'My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation'. Men, in a marriage relationship, are asked to be like Christ! What can be more difficult? To be like Christ when the church isn't watching, to be like Christ when your brothers in Christ aren't watching, when it's just you, the wife and the children! A Christian husband, you see, is called to a life of Christ-likeness, and as Christ was for the church we are to be as family men. As Christ rode, and trod and kneeled a life of prayer for His own in John 17, we are to pray for our own, our family. We are to be priests, great high priests before God, in intercession for those that are our kith and kin, we are to seek God's counsel for them through the word of God and through prayer. And men! - we sin...oh, we sin when we do not lead our wives.

How can we expect our wives to respect us and submit if we aren't submitting to Him? The problem today, I believe, within the church - and maybe it's a filter through from society where men have been trodden underfoot by the women's lib movement, and maybe they deserve it for many a year, but it has got so out of hand that it has turned on its head and men won't be men anymore! And that's why in fellowships around here there are women ministering at the table, there are women praying, there are women giving out the emblems, there are women doing everything! And that is wrong! But what are the men doing? Young man what are you doing? What are you doing within the life of an assembly? What are you doing for the Lord? Are you usurping, - are you sitting back and letting the women take the lead? There's many a woman missionary had to go to the field because God couldn't find a man who He could speak to. Oh, that we would suffer this word of exhortation tonight and realize the power that this marriage can be for God and for Christ. And women (for it's your night tonight!) you need also to realize the value that you have in the eyes of God. You have great value and you need to value yourself, you need to realize that you're needed by your husband, that you're needed by the church - yes, you're needed by the church! For if God believed that Adam could live self-sufficiently, Eve would never have been created, isn't that right? Ivor Powell in his commentary on this book wrote this: 'A world without women would be a battlefield upon which men would die for supremacy. A world of men would never know the laughter of children and the joy of being young. A masculine world would eventually become an international graveyard. Men may furnish a house, but only a woman's touch can make it a home. Males enjoy a sense of importance, but the lustre of achievement is only made possible by women whose influence sometimes removes mountains'. And I believe it is true to say, generally speaking, that behind every good man is a good woman.

Now women, take the challenge from the word of God, you don't have to have a position within the church of Jesus Christ, it baffles me that nobody can do anything unless you give them a title or position within the

church. There are plenty of things that can be done, and that the Lord may have you to do, if you would only go and do it, women. I'll not stop you, the oversight won't stop you. For in the New Testament it strikes me the importance of women in God's plan: Mary worshipped at the feet of Christ, Martha prepared meals for Christ, Dorcas made garments and helped the poor, Priscilla helped her husband to instruct a young preacher named Apollos, Peter's wife's mother arose from her bed to serve the Lord, a devoted band of women served the Lord. Paul commended Phoebe to the church at Rome, chapter 16:2, 'That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also'.

A good woman in a marriage, a good woman in the family, and a good woman in the church is a jewel of heaven. If you want to know how to be a good woman look at Proverbs 31. There is nothing more attractive, you can read it when you get home, nothing more attractive than a woman fulfilling the role that God has assigned to her. Why is it that people, even Christians, even the followers of Christ hate this doctrine? They detest it! Paul is accused of being a bigot, of being narrow minded, a woman-hater, or that his views just reflect the social customs of the day and therefore aren't applicable today at all. Do you know what that is? Whenever you find that, beware! You would be surprised at the places where I did find that, reading today - but that is a subtle, indirect attack on the inspiration and infallibility of the word of God: 'It was for then, not for today' - you better believe that it's for today, friends, right today. History testifies that if you refuse God's word you refuse Him!

If you look at history you can see the chaos where God's order is altered. By usurping the place of leadership and authority, and acting for her husband - Eve, what did she do? She introduced sin into the human race! And it has happened down the ages in families, it's happening through the cults and through liberal Christianity, where women have left their God-given sphere and wreaked havoc in the local church! And do you know something? Whether they realize it, or admit it or not - ultimately the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ is at stake. When divorce is used by Christians as the natural, desirable option and answer - and my heart goes out to those who have this inflicted on them - but when Christians in the world see it as an option, see it as a 'get-out clause', when young people run into marriage with non-Christians, or without consulting God and rush into marrying any Christian, the name of Christ is dishonoured!

Finally then: how does she submit? Quickly, verse 24: 'Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing'. How does she submit? First of all: ecclesiastically. 'Ecclesia' is the Greek word for church, and that's simply what it means: like the church, 'churchily'. She submits 'churchily' unto him, just as the church submits unto Christ, you - wife - are to submit unto your husband. Christianity is not down on women you know - for nothing could more exalt the role of a woman than comparing her with the role of the church that Jesus Christ shed His own blood to purchase! The church's subjection to Christ is your pattern as a wife, that's your pattern. Imagine that! To live as Christ and His church together in holy matrimony. Yes, I acknowledge what Paul says in Galatians 3:28: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus' - but get this, as we go into this study in the weeks that lie ahead, get this into your mind: equality of worth is not equality of role. They are different, and just as our submission to Christ elevates our spirit - you know, as you bow to Him in your own spiritual life - so when the wife bows to her husband who is Christ-centred and falling under the lordship of Christ, so her life, her walk and her very countenance will be enriched.

She is to submit ecclesiastically, and secondly extensively. Look at the very last word in verse 24: '...in everything' - now note that is not a carte blanc obedience, that is in everything in accordance with the will of God! No wife is expected by God to obey her husband when it would mean a compromise of her loyalty to Christ. Paul says in Colossians 3 verse 18: 'Wives, submit', and obey, 'yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord' - as it is fit in the Lord, that's the quality, that's the qualification.

As we close, to submit to his godly authority is obedience. Wives, listen: to not submit is sin. You can discuss it, you can disagree about it - but woman, for Christ's sake and God's sake, have a desire at the end of the day that he fulfil his God-given role. The beauty about it all is, as verse 32 tells us, that this is a great mystery - for Paul speaks not only concerning man and woman, but Christ and His church. And marriage is given an exalted state by God, for we are living out a picture of Christ and the church - the married couple is playing out an illustration of the greatest theme of the ages. The loving husband is likened to Christ, and the holy wife will be likened to the church that He will marry! What a weapon in the hands of a holy God to use in His conquest! So let us begin to live out, by the Spirit's help, that great drama of the ages of Christ and His glorious church.

Our Father, we thank Thee for the practicality of Thy truth. We thank Thee that there's nothing that we need apart from it - and we pray, Lord, for all those wives in this building tonight, we commit them unto Thee and ask for them the power and the grace to live godly in Christ Jesus. We pray for the husbands, that as they seek their wives to submit to them, that they would submit to our Lord Jesus Christ. And Lord, for all of us, that we would do all things to the glory of God, that in this dark, sinful age, that the bright light of Christ may be seen in us. Hear us we pray, in Jesus name. Amen.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - January 2001

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Christ In The Home - Chapter 2

"The Christian Husband"

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Ephesians 5:25-33

1. ***Sacrificial Love (verse 25)***
2. ***Sanctifying Love (verses 26-27)***
3. ***Symmetrical Love (verses 28-33)***

Now let me make you welcome to our Bible reading tonight, here in the Iron Hall - it's great to see you all out with us, thank you for coming and may the Lord bless you for making the effort to come around His word this evening. Ephesians chapter 5, Ephesians 5 and this is our 25th study in the book of Ephesians - and this is, as it were, a sub-series within the whole study of the book. And what I mean by that is that in chapter 5 we are beginning to look at 'Christ in the Home' - or at least that is what I have entitled it - in other words: the impact that Christ has upon the family relationship and upon the home. Now this is not some philosophical, religious ethic that just changes the mind and spirit, but it actually changes relationships - it comes into the very heart of life itself, the family, and it has an awesome impact upon a relationship between a man and a woman, a husband and a wife, and between a parent and a child, and as we'll see in later weeks between the master and the slave. There is a sphere of influence that Christ has, and if we fail to recognise that Christ Jesus, the Lord, influences everything when He comes into the life we have failed to realise what this great Christian life really is - it impacts everything, it should change everything. So we're looking at 'Christ in the Home', and we looked last week at the Christian wife and we had a little bit of time also looking at how the wife relates to the Christian husband, and this week we're going to look specifically at the Christian husband - but the wives have something to listen to as well this week!

But we'll begin our reading at verse 25, that is where our study begins - but we'll read from verse 22 to get the whole context: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour" - we saw that that word could be translated 'preserver' - 'of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband".

'The Christian Husband' - the key verse in this passage, as in many of our passages there has been a key verse and it's important that we notice them to interpret the passage, the key verse this week is verse 31 I believe. Look at it: 'For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh' - I beg your pardon, 32 is the key verse - 'This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church'. And those two verses together form the key that we have here in this whole passage, verse 31: the relationship between a man and a woman, two separate entities, two individuals who have been brought together and begun to love one another, and are united in marriage and become one flesh. Now that's all that verse 31 says, it's purely speaking of the marriage relationship, and indeed it's a quotation from the book of Genesis chapter 2 and verse 24 - and the point is 'one flesh' as God ordained it in the beginning, as God made it, a man and a woman come together, are married and become one flesh. But

the dual purpose of the passage, and the dual key of it is found in verse 32: 'This is a great mystery', Paul says, 'but I speak concerning Christ and the church'. So in verse 31 he speaks of one flesh, the marriage relationship; and then in verse 32 he says, 'But this is a profound, a great mystery, for I speak concerning Christ and the church'.

So the keys to the passage are verse 31 and 32, and from it we see there is a dual purpose in the passage. It's as if there are two spheres that are entwined together, uniquely, as one; there are two themes, two purposes - but Paul brings them all together into one thing, one entity. Of course the passage speaks of marriage, and if we were to define marriage we would say, at least, that it's fourfold. First of all an emotional relationship, as we read in the book of Genesis - and it's important always to go to that book of beginnings to find the definitions of life - and there we have that it is an emotional union: you remember God looked at His creation and He saw that all was good, but yet He said this: 'It is not good that a man should be alone' - and so He created Eve, a help-meet for Adam, so there is an emotional relationship there that marriage fulfils. And then we could define it, secondly, as being a social relationship - it meets all social needs: it continues the race, it populates the world...and Adam was told, 'Be fruitful and multiply' - that is one of the reasons for the marriage union. So it's emotional, it's social, and then thirdly it's physical. It is the relationship that God has ordained whereby we fulfil the natural, physical desires that are given to us by God, the sexual urges and appetites that God has put within us and created within us - that is God's ideal, ordained by Him for that purpose.

But fourthly, and primarily given to us in this passage this evening, it's not only the emotional need that is met by marriage, and the social and physical - but Paul speaks specifically of the spiritual need. This union, this marital union meets a spiritual need and it has a spiritual purpose. And Paul is saying to us all in this century, this evil century that we have now entered into, we must not fail to recognise that marriage is a spiritual thing. It's not a legal thing alone, it's not only something in the eyes of the state, or even in the eyes of the church, it's not a cultural thing, it's not simply a relational thing of convenience - but this marriage union, whereby a man and a woman become one flesh, is spiritual. And even the most physical aspect of marriage, when the two physical bodies become one flesh, that itself entails a spiritual act. I believe, personally, that in that act there is an exchange of the soul. That is why, I believe, that God abhors the sins of fornication, adultery, and all the perversions of His own ideal. And that is what this world, that is dying and breathing its last breath in depravity, has failed to recognise: that when a man or a woman unite outside the marriage relationship they are exchanging souls, they're going into a deep relationship of personality with one another - and the one-night-stand makes a mockery of God's ideal! You are playing spiritual 'Russian roulette', it is an abomination to God! You've heard the expression 'soul mates', and I believe that that is a well founded expression - it is the deepest knowledge that two human beings can have of one another, and that is why God abhors and abominates any perversion of His plan and His ideal.

Now, if the previous verse that we studied in-depth last week, verse 22, was on its own it would be very unfair to all the sisters in the Assembly here tonight! But it's not, it's not on its own, but it gives with it a high standard of the husband - there's not only something expected of the wife, but indeed I believe there's a higher standard expected of the husband, God's appointed head in the home. And you can get no higher standard, for the standard that is given is the standard of Christ! The illustration that is given by the Holy Spirit through Paul, is that the marriage relationship should operate just like Christ and the church operate together. Now, as we enter into this study, just as last week, we need to note the balance, we need to understand that husbands - in the light of what we studied last week - are not to keep their wives in subjection alone. Wives are to be subject to their husbands, they are to obey their husband in the Lord, they are to recognise their husband as the head of the home - but the husband is not to lord it over the wife, he is not to keep his wife in subjection. But the other side of the coin to her subjection to her husband, is the great love of God in Christ reflected in her husband - what a high standard! It's remarkable! You can't get a higher standard - morally speaking, spiritually speaking - for this man, this husband, to represent the love of Christ in his marriage.

The man said it well when he said: 'No wife would mind being subject to a husband who loves her as Christ loves the church', isn't that right? There'd be no problem, ladies, would there? It would be no problem to do what your husband said if he loved you as Christ loved the church, because you'd know that in the depths of his decisions, in the depths of his wisdom, was a love like Christ's love and a wisdom like Christ's wisdom. A man on one occasion feared that he loved his wife too much, and a spiritual man counselled him and asked him if his love for his wife was more than the love of Christ for the church. Isn't that the point? That wise spiritual man told him: 'Only when you go beyond that love are you loving your wife too much!'. In other words you can't love your wife too much! Because you can never exceed and you can never - as we begin we need to realise - you can never, ever meet that love wherewith Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.

Within this passage of Scripture our Lord's love for His church is presented in three wonderful parts. The movements within this whole song of love, if you like, incorporate the past, Christ's love for us in the past. Then we have Christ's love in the present, and then eventually His love for His church in the future. This love of Christ that we find here is to be reflected - and this is Paul's point - His love must be reflected in marriage. So what are the ways in which that love must be reflected? The first way is found on your sheet, your first point: it is a sacrificial love. Verse 25: 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it' - now that's the past, isn't it? That is the past, the previous aspect in Christ's love: He gave Himself. Love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself. We're talking about the atonement, we are on holy ground, we're talking about the ransom payment, the purchase price, indeed the greatest price ever paid in love to purchase any bride. When you go into the book of Genesis you find there Adam lying, and God puts a deep sleep over him, and God thrusts His hand into his side and takes forth a rib from Adam and with it He makes a wife, Eve. And we have a holy parallel at Calvary, for God thrusts His hand into the side of His own Son and brings out, by precious blood, a people unto Himself - isn't that beautiful? Brings out a wife, a holy bride, from the death of Christ, from the blood of Christ, from that great price wherewith we are bought, for we are not our own, we are bought with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus, as a lamb without blemish and without spot. And that is the past love that Paul is giving husbands as an example of how we ought to love our wives - what a price, what a love, what a giving of self! And that's the point: give yourself! For God so loved the world that He gave!

Do you give yourself for your wife? For that's what a husband is to do, he's to give himself. You see, this is radical. Of course, to women's lib today and to a modern politically correct society that we live in, this is old-hat, it's Victorian, puritanical stuff that we're talking about. But in the world which Paul was in, and the world that the Holy Spirit was inspiring these words to, this was radical, this was revolutionary! It was never heard of before, and people didn't want it - and I'm talking about the establishment, the academia, they couldn't handle it! Indeed, if you look at the way marriage was held in the pagan world you find a few home truths. If you look at Demothnases (sp?) he said this: 'We have prostitutes for the sake of pleasure. We have concubines for the sake of daily co-habitation. We have wives for the purpose of having children legitimately, and of having a faithful guardian for all our household affairs'. Zenophon (sp?) said - and it was his belief that this should be the husband's aim that a wife should do: 'The wife might see as little as possible and ask as little as possible' - that's what a wife was to be! To see as little as possible in the home and to ask as little as possible. Socrates, you know him, you've heard great things about him, this is what he said: 'Is there anyone to whom you entrust more serious matters than to your wife? And is there anyone to whom you talk less?'. One writer tells us that the ancient pagan man breathed adultery - that's not an exaggeration, he breathed it, he sweat it, he lived adultery! The marriage bond was virtually meaningless, it didn't mean anything at all!

We may assume from the Old Testament that the Jews had a better view of marriage, except of course in our Lord's day - when He walked upon the earth there was the ultra-liberal Jews who didn't have a terribly superior view of marriage than these old pagan reprobates. Of course there was the school of Helel (sp?) and he believed, that Rabbi, that you could divorce your wife for almost anything - even if she burnt the dinner

you could divorce your wife! And he was very popular, as you can imagine - everybody was joining his school! But that was even the Jewish view of marriage, it had fallen into disrepute, it wasn't looked upon in any sacred way. And to that backdrop you can imagine what it was for Paul the apostle to come and say: 'Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church', imagine! Imagine the impact, the explosiveness of what that meant to those people - to love as Christ loved the church? If you think that it had an impact then, you better believe that it has an impact now! That in our world, and even in the church, to love your wife as Christ loved the church - you feel the impact, husbands, when you hear that, don't you? It's a hard - in fact it's an impossible thing to do, yet we are to strive after it and try our best by the Spirit of God to love them, to give ourselves for them.

It's a sacrificial love and a sacrificial love is simply a selfless love, isn't it? That's what sacrificial means, to lay your life down - and it's selfless. I believe that this is primarily, in the light of Scripture, the reason for much marital failure today: there is a lack of selflessness. They go into marriage deciding what they're going to get when they divorce, before they've even tied the knot! There's no selflessness in it any more. And even within the church there is little selflessness, isn't there? There's little sacrificial love, like Jacob for Rachel - you remember, he sacrificially worked 14 years to win her. He didn't care for that other seven years after he was done out of his bride, he went on the extra seven, because true christian, godly, holy love seeketh not her own - isn't that Paul says? 1 Corinthians 13, go down the definition of love - you don't seek your own, it's not a selfish love, it is a love that is sacrificial, which is a love that is willing to pay the price. You hear the men say: 'I'd die for my wife' (maybe you don't hear too many of them say it - but sometimes, maybe in a fit of excitement, or delirium, they shout: 'I would die for my wife!') - isn't that right? But how many husbands die daily for their wife? I would hope most of us probably would die for our wives if it came to the bit in a situation - but dying daily is a different thing, isn't it? To be selfless for our wives, to pay the price of what it means to love as Christ loved the church - 'as Christ', let those words sink into your psyche, 'as Christ'!

Philippians 2 gives us a perfect illustration: He thought it not something to be grasped, but He made Himself of no - not 'low', 'no' - reputation, He humbled Himself, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Now, how many marriage guidance counsellors would set down in their first lesson Philippians chapter 2 and say: 'Now men look, that's your standard, that's what you've to live by'? That's too high a standard, why would Paul even make such a comparison? Paul makes the comparison because that's what's needed! A selfless, sacrificial love, a love like Christ's great love where:

'Out of the ivory palaces,
And into a world of woe.
Only His great eternal love
Made my Saviour go!'

Was His love not a special love? For I hope all of you are united already to your wife if you're married, that's the case isn't it? You're already united! But He was not united with His bride, He loved her when she would not receive Him, He loved her - while we were yet sinners Christ died for us! How many of us love a person when they don't love us back? How many of us love a person when they rebuke us, disdain us, detest us? How many would love if they crucified us? But He loved the unlovely, and there's sometimes we're unlovely, but we're to love nevertheless.

His love's selfless and special, it's also a satisfying love, for He sees of the travail of His soul - Isaiah says - He sees what His great love at Calvary wrought when people come to Him, when His sheep hear His voice and follow Him He is satisfied. You remember when He brought that sheep home, the great rejoicing there was: 'The sheep I've lost has come home!' - and His love is a satisfying love. Can you imagine how the Lord felt when He saw a mother clutching the child who had just been given life again? Imagine that! How satisfying His love was! And if you give love in the marriage relationship, men, it will satisfy - if you give anything, indeed, the word of God says you will receive good measure, shaken together, pressed down and running over! Do you see what's coming through here? Christ's love is selfless, it's special, and in turn it is satisfying - but the point is: it is never, ever selfish. Never!

We could say it's a protective love. It's protective, it's never thoughtless or careless with the one He loves. He possessed the ability to foresee, didn't He - the Lord - into the future, He knew what we would need, He knew the grace that we would need for the trials that we go through, He knew the equipment that we would need spiritually speaking to live in this adulterous generation and to come through to heaven eventually. He knew, and He looked forward and He was able to protect us from these things. You remember He was out preaching and there was 5000 people all around Him, and He knew that they needed fed, and He protected them and fed them. Out in the storm, there He was, and His disciples thought they weren't being protected and they shook Him awake, 'Master, carest Thou not that we perish?' - and He woke and He stilled the storm! And He's still stilling storms, praise the Lord! He protected His own sheep. He went to Simon, He could see that he was going to betray Him, but He could see that he was going to need help to get through it all: 'Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to sift thee like wheat, to have thee - but I have prayed for thee'. He protects, that's His love, that's the nature of it! In the Old Testament He sent the ravens for old Elijah, didn't He? He sent an old fish for Jonah to protect him, to stop him getting drowned He sent it. And this is the miracle: that that protective love of God in Christ is the love, men, that you're to have for your wives! It's unbelievable, isn't it?

It's a protective love, it's a provisional love. It provides things, doesn't it? Paul says to husbands in 1 Thessalonians 3 and verse 10: 'If any would not work' - notice it doesn't say 'could not work', this is a matter of the will, not predicament - 'If anyone will not work, neither should he eat'. Husbands have got to provide, as far as they can they've got to provide for their wives materially speaking - and Paul taught that to meet the need, the Lord Jesus Christ for the church give up all that He possessed. He knew they needed to be reconciled, so He went to the cross to provide for them, the sacrificial Lamb being Himself, to shed His blood for His own people. He knew they needed an advocate in heaven to represent them before the bar of justice, and He went to heaven and He represents us now at the right hand of God as our Great High Priest! It's a provisional love for He's praying for us at this very minute, in John 17 before He left this scene of time He prayed for us, and He hasn't stopped praying since. And men, if we're going to be the husbands God wants us to be we need to pray for our wives, as Christ prayed for the church. We need to pray for our families, our children, our mothers and fathers, the whole gamut of the family - because Christ loved His church like that!

His love is a present love - and what I mean by that is: Christ is with His bride. He's present with us, isn't He? That's the whole point - we wouldn't want to meet like this if Christ is not in our midst. But how many husbands can say they're present with their wife? It's like the couple that were sitting watching television in the living-room on the settee. And there was a gas explosion, and the settee went out the window and them along with it, and they were left sitting on the front lawn. And the woman started crying, and the husband says: 'What are you crying about? It's not a time to be crying!'. She said: 'I'm so happy, for it's the first time I've been out in years!' Isn't that what some of our marriages are like? Christ is present with us, He is present with us - and we need to be present, we need to spend time with our loved ones!

And here's the great climax of Christ's sacrificial love for us: it's a faithful love! 'My sheep hear my voice and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish. No man shall pluck them out of my hand, neither shall any man pluck them out of my Father's hand' - it's a faithful love. And if we are to be faithful, as our Bridegroom is faithful to His church we must be faithful as husbands. Old Jeremy Taylor said: 'Faith is unspotted chastity' - that's what faithfulness is! To be chaste! He goes on to say: 'That is the marriage ring' - you know, the old Puritans didn't believe in marriage rings because they believed that your word should be your bond, and your faithfulness should be the marriage ring that speaks that you are another's! He says: 'It ties' - that chastity ties - 'two hearts by an eternal band. It is like the cherubim's flaming sword set for the guard of Paradise'. Husbands, how chaste are we? How chaste are we in our minds and our eyes?

This is a sacrificial love - we could finish at that and we'd all fail, isn't that right? But secondly, it's a sanctifying love. Paul says this in verse 26 and verse 27: 'That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish'. This is the Lord's love presently, not the past love, but how He is loving the church at this moment. And His love is manifest to His church in sanctification, in holiness, giving the power and the ability and the grace to live a holy life down here on earth. F. W. Grant translates this verse like this: 'That he might sanctify it, cleansing it by the washing of water by the word' - that's how He sanctifies it, by the washing of the word. In Palestine, before a bride was married, before she went to the ceremony, she passed through the ceremonial purifying waters. She was made clean before she united with her husband. And the word that Paul is trying to get across here is 'sanctify'. We are, as husbands, to sanctify our wives, as Christ at this moment is sanctifying His church.

Now 'sanctify' is the same idea as 'holy' - it means 'to set apart'. And in marriage the husband is set apart for the wife, and the wife is set apart for the husband - and any interference with that setting apart is sin! Of course, the church has been set apart positionally, hasn't she? She is already sanctified in that she is in Christ, and we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, but she day by day is being sanctified, and we individually, practically speaking. It's a process, a moral and spiritual preparation getting more accentuated until the day that we actually come and see the Lord face-to-face, and we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. It's like Esther chapter 2 and verses 12 to 16, before she was presented to King Ahasuerus she underwent a one year course of beauty treatment before she was prepared to meet her King. The process of sanctification within Christ's church is created by the washing of water - now that's the washing of the word, that's not speaking, at least I don't believe it's speaking about baptism or anything like that - it's speaking about the word of God, simply your life being washed and cleansed when you hear the words of our Lord and you obey them. Sure, He said that - John 15:3 'Now you are clean', He told the disciples, 'through the word which I have spoken unto you'. John 17:17, He prays to the Father for us: 'Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth'. And just as the blood of the Saviour cleanses us from guilt and from the consequences of sin, the water of the word of God cleanses us continually from the defilement and from the pollution of sin. The Psalmist asked, the young Psalmist in his mind at least asked the question - 119: 'How shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to thy word', 'Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee' - and it's this cleansing influence of the word of God that is continually sanctifying, the church is being bathed and cleansed by the agent of the water of the word of God.

So, here comes the other sphere, the parallel: therefore husband's love ought to be a cleansing love. It ought to be a sanctifying love, it ought to sanctify his wife and it ought to sanctify himself. And we - think of this - we husbands ought to be the means of our wives sanctification! Now the question is: do we provoke her to anger or do we provoke her to sanctification? In other words: both husband and wife our becoming more and more and more like their Lord Jesus Christ. Are you helping your wife to be more holy? Are you helping her in your attitudes and in your reactions, in your answers and in your behaviour, in your habits? Wives are you helping your husbands be more holy and be more Christ-like, or are you winding him up? You see, the point is: if the lordship of Christ is what marks a marriage, the relationship in the home will be a holy one! It will be one whereby husband and wife together are becoming more holy and are constantly growing in grace as a pair as well as an individual, together as one person, one body, they are becoming more holy. They are being sanctified, for the word of God - as Colossians 3:16 says - the word of Christ dwells in their hearts richly, with all wisdom. They are teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs - singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

We don't have time to look at it, but 1 Peter and chapter 3, in verse 1 you find there that the holy life of a saved wife is able to influence, even to conversion, her unholy, unsaved husband. But as you go further down that chapter to verse 7 you find something else - and we will take time to read it. 1 Peter and chapter 3

and verse 7: 'Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with [your wives] according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel' - now note that, ladies: 'unto the weaker vessel', that is not a sexist remark, that is God's word - and that's fact. In the beginning it was Eve that sinned first, and in that she is the weaker vessel, I believe that is one of the reasons that within the local church she is not given a position of leadership. So we have to honour that, not disdain that, we've to honour that fact and protect as the weaker vessel...and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered'. What an amazing thought: that if our relationship - husbands and wives - is not right with one another in some point, that it could be hindering our prayers!

Verse 27, we must move on. The reason He sanctifies His bride, the church, is: 'That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish'. The church isn't perfect, and our wives aren't perfect either - and I'll pay for that later! But isn't that right? None of us are perfect, and His church isn't perfect - it has spots, it has wrinkles. And spots are defilement that comes from without, from contact with unclean things - it's an outward uncleanness - wrinkles come from decay from within. And because we become defiled by the world and from the flesh within, we need cleansing don't we? We need to be cleansed continually with the word of God - James taught: 'Keep yourselves unspotted from the world' - and the way we do that is through the word of God. As the church is nourished by the word of God those wrinkles and those spots will disappear, and the church will become cleaner, it will become more youthful, more beautiful if we allow the Spirit of God to apply the word of God to our hearts and change us. And the point is: our marriages also will change!

Wives aren't perfect, but they will change when you're a holy husband - that's the point. When you love as Christ loved, when you sanctify as Christ sanctifies, and then one day - and here is the future love - one day in glorification He will present to Himself a holy church, a glorious bride. A. T. Pearson (sp?) said, think of it: 'When the omniscient eye looks upon us at the last day, He will not find anything that is too immaculate for His holiness' - not even a pimple, not a mole on a human face. How incredible that His awesome holiness that we were thinking of yesterday morning will look at us on that day and not find one thing. He will say: 'Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee'. When He hung upon the cross, and when He was about to die and breathe His last and give up the ghost, surely He looked back at the earliest stages and recalled what was determined by His holy Father. And then, with an exultant cry of relief and joy, He exclaimed: 'It is finished!' - but that was only the finish of the final phase, for there were more phases to come. And there will be a day that is yet to come, when again He will exclaim in triumph as He looks at us, absolutely perfect - and as we are robbed of pain, and robbed of death, and robbed of trial, and every memory of sin is gone - He will say again: 'It is finished!'.

But we must move on. It is a symmetrical love - and what 'symmetrical' means is simply a shape with parts in it that reflect one another if you like. You know if you had a shape on a piece of paper and you put a mirror, you would get a symmetrical image, an identical image, yet it's still one entity. And this is what Paul is saying from verses 28 to 33, that marriage is the uniting of two persons, but they become one entity - but there is this symmetrical relationship. And after he deals with Christ's love for the church, Paul now reminds husbands again that this is your pattern, this is your pattern for living as a Christian husband - you are to imitate the love of Christ for His church. Indeed, he goes on to say, verse 28, you are to love as you love your own body, your own wife. Love your own wife - that's monogamy - love your own wife and love her as yourself! It's interesting the amount of times Paul mentions 'your own wife' and 'love as yourself'. In verse 28, the first part, he says 'his own body', and then in verse 28 the second part he says 'himself'. In verse 33 he says 'himself' again, verse 29 he says 'his own flesh' - and the point is, when two become one flesh in union, the husband loves his wife if he loves himself because he is one person with her! Do you understand? Two have become one, and if he doesn't love his wife he's not loving himself!

It's the golden rule of life, and indeed it's the golden rule of marriage too: 'Love your wife as yourself'. The Lord said, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself', 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you' - but this is

what it is in marriage: 'Love your wife as yourself'. This is the self love that is permitted within the word of God, and just as we have found already in chapter 4 and verse 16 of this epistle that love is the circulatory system of the church of Jesus Christ, it's what fits it all together and keeps it together as the body of Christ - so love keeps the body of husband and wife together in the home. There should never be the cry from a Christian home: 'I'm starved of love!' Because if you're loving your wife as Christ loved the church, and if the wife is reverencing her husband that should never be - if there's a submitting to the lordship of Christ all will be well! And this is a symmetrical love in that it is mutually satisfying; each party is to satisfy the other. You're not to seek your own! It's a man loving his wife, and he does it and he is loving himself, and if he is loving himself of course he will be satisfied emotionally, socially, physically and spiritually - and there'll be no temptation for him to look elsewhere for fulfilment!

In verse 29 he is to nourish. And the word 'to nourish' has the sense of 'to mature'. And the man, every man and every woman, has the instinct to care for their body, to nourish - that's inward feeding - and to cherish, that's outward, to keep warm and safe. And you feed your body, you clothe your body, you bathe it, you protect it from discomfort, pain and harm - and your survival depends on it - and that is what Christ did for His church! That is what we as husbands are to do for our wives. Now imagine this, our time has gone, but imagine this folks: our marriage home is to be an illustration of the great drama of the ages. Imagine that! It's to be a representation, an object lesson to the world and to those around us, that this is the great love story of Christ and His church - and it makes marriage a serious thing, as I've said many a time, not to be entered upon lightly or unadvisedly, but with due thought and consideration. Not because you get on with a man, not because you have things in common, not just because he's saved, but because it's God's will!

And in verse 30 and verse 31 and verse 32 we have the climax whereby Paul tells us that this is showing us the representation, this marriage is the mystery. And a mystery, you remember, is something that was hidden and now revealed - it's not something mysterious, but God is now revealing that this is what it's all about! But in verse 33 he comes back to this point, just in case we get carried away with the spiritual mystical church in Christ and forget about our responsibilities in the family - and he comes back and reminds again: wives, reverence your husbands; husbands, love your wives.

Now as we close let's take just one more. Imagine if Christians adhered to this, and if Christian husbands and wives have the Spirit of God - and they do - and have everything that they need to live like this, why are they not living like it now? And the point is further up the chapter that we dealt with a couple of weeks ago, and it's this: one - the problem of marriage is, and always has been, sin; and two - the answer always has been, and always will be, the Lord Jesus Christ. And if the husband and the wife are filled with the Spirit, that's the point, it's in the same chapter - if you're filled with the Spirit it's the answer to marriage, it's the answer to the home, it's the answer to revival, it's the answer to everything! It is such a home as this, and only this, that will commend the preaching of the Gospel from that pulpit and in your life.

Our Father, we hail the day that we will stand before Thee and before Thy Son, and we will stand in white robes of righteousness without spot or wrinkle. Thy bride, bought with the blood of Christ out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. And Lord, in the light of that great fact, we pray that husbands will be husbands as Christ, and wives will be wives as the church, and Lord, that we will do all things in our homes to the glory of God. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

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Christ In The Home - Chapter 3

"Parents And Children"

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Ephesians 6:1-4

1. **God's Will For Children (verses 1-3)**
 - a. *Obedience To Parents*
 - b. *Fellowship With The Lord*
 - c. *Natural Rightness*
 - d. *Scriptural Adherence*
 - e. *Resultant Blessing*
2. **God's Will For Parents (verse 4)**
 - a. *Do Not Provoke*
 - b. *Nourish*
 - c. *Discipline*
 - d. *Instruct*

Ephesians chapter 6, and we enter a new chapter - in fact, the last chapter of this little book. This is the third part of our sub-series within the epistle to the Ephesians, and we're looking at 'Christ in the Home'. We've looked at the Christian wife, last week we looked at the Christian husband, and we've looked both those nights at the Christian marriage and what it entails to the glory of God. Tonight we're going to look at 'Christ in the Home Part 3' and it's 'Parents and Children'. Now before I read this passage of Scripture, many of you may think: 'Well, this boy doesn't know what he's talking about, he hasn't got any!'. Well, I'm in good company because, as far as I can tell, Paul didn't have any either! And that's who we're reading this evening, and he was inspired by the Spirit of God - so I will take the word of God, as he did, from the Spirit of God and apply it to your hearts tonight. So it doesn't matter, really - didn't matter to Paul, and it doesn't matter to me - so listen to what I have to say tonight.

Verses 1 to 4: 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord'. Now, before I go on any further, there's a wee tune I can hear and it's somebody's phone or something, maybe you can't hear it - it's gone off now, that's alright - just in case there's an emergency and somebody's children need their parents, or something like that!

OK, now: this is a great subject we enter into this evening, for no matter where we look in the society in which we live today there is rebellion all around. We looked at the relationship between husbands and wives, and we have looked at how the wife is to submit to the husband - and we find that that is not 'in vogue' today, and there is a rebellion within the marriage relationship, so much so that marriage is declining today. It's better, in the eyes of the world, to live together, to co-habit, and not to make that commitment - in fact, the government has set that in stone by making it a benefit for you not to marry. You see it in that relationship, you also see it in the relationship that we're entering into tonight: parents and children. Children are rebelling against their parents, and indeed also in legal circles that is also being set in stone. Next week, God willing, we will look at how this relationship is breaking down also between employers and employees - and it seems that employers have to go very far lengths to keep men and women from going on strike, and it's very difficult to be an employer in the days in which we live.

We see it in our own land, with relation to the government and citizens - that citizens no longer recognise the government as appointed by God. As the book of Romans teaches us: we may not agree with everything that the government tells us to do - it would be a funny thing if we did - but yet we are still to recognise that the powers are ordained by God. Sadly we find it in the local church, when members will not adhere to God's guidance through overseers. And there is rebellion all over the world, no matter where we turn we find it. We find division, we find antagonism wherever we look, and it's strange because the humanist tells us that we live in the most educated time ever, supposedly it's the most civilised society that the world has ever seen - yet this antagonism, this division and rebellion, seems to be rife all over, universally there is a panorama of division.

Now Paul's solution in our little book is found in chapter 1, verse 10 that we looked at many months ago - this is the solution to this problem in the world: 'That in the dispensation of the fullness of times [God] might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him'. That is the answer to all the division that there is in society, and even within the church of Jesus Christ. God's great plan of the ages is that one day, because of the atonement of Christ at the cross, He will bring all things together 'one in Christ'. In other words, God's answer for this problem of rebellion in this sinful world is: regeneration. Regeneration! To be born from above, to be born again of the Spirit of God - and when that happens in the life of a believer there will be spiritual harmony that will mark that child of God. We have looked in these last couple of weeks - and this is our third week - at how that spiritual harmony overflows into the home, into the heart of humanity. When the doors are closed, when no one else is looking but it's just you, the wife, the children, the grandchildren or whoever - but they see you as you really are, and it's then that this great Christian faith kicks in. It's then that it becomes different than all the other religions in the world and the impact of the Christian family, as we have been looking at, cannot be underestimated. Indeed, we learnt in chapter 5 - the theme of this chapter being the fullness of the Spirit, that great subject - that it is when the wife is filled with the Spirit that she will be submissive to her husband. We learnt last week that when the husband is filled with the Spirit he will love his wife and submit to the love of Christ - as Christ loved the church he will love her! As the couple - one person - are united together in matrimony, that couple will submit to the lordship of Christ in their marriage together.

Now we come to the Christian child. Paul again comes with the same theme: Christian children, they submit to the authority of their parents. Verse 4 is the last verse in a series of verses in a passage that begins in verse 21 of chapter 5 - remember that the divisions that we have in the New Testament and throughout the Bible were added by men, they are not inspired of the Spirit of God, and some of them, as we've said before, are put in good places and others of them are not put in such good places. This is one of them, because Paul's train of thought is started in verse 21 of chapter 5: 'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God' - and then we have all the relationships: the wife to the husband, the husband to the wife, chapter 6 now we have children to their parents. And Paul's train of thought is this - and if we miss this, we miss everything - that the key to the Christian life, the key to the church of Jesus Christ, and the key to a harmonious home is the fullness of the Spirit of Almighty God. Therefore, if it is a Spirit-filled home, children will obey their parents in the Lord for this is right.

Now we'll begin looking at God's will for children from this passage. Your first point on your study sheet: God's will - what is God's word to the children? Often people think that God has nothing to say to the children, but when you look into the Old Testament and indeed look at the prophet Samuel, it was only a child that God could speak to at that time. It's good to see some of the young people out, but this doesn't just apply to children, it applies to all of us who are children by the flesh. We may be grown up, but we are still someone's children and that relationship always goes on until our parents pass away and we go to glory. But here we have God's word to the children.

Now I want you to notice this first of all: that Paul is, himself, admonishing children in the assembly at Ephesus. Now that is so important - he is speaking through this letter to children who are in the assembly, listening to his letter as it is being read out. That's refreshing, isn't it? That the boys and the girls came to church, they went to worship with their family, they came to be with the people of God, they weren't segregated - it's important to have Sunday School and children's meetings, but it's also important that children are brought into the body of the church and listen to the word of God, for that's how many of them have got saved. There they were, the children meeting with the church, the families attending public worship together, and Paul addresses the children first. Isn't that strange? Well, it's not really strange because he addresses the wives first, he addresses the children first and he addresses the slaves first in the next passage. What he is doing is - as we have learnt in the last few weeks - that societies values are being turned on their head by the church of Jesus Christ!

What does Paul say to the children? The first thing on your sheet is this: he says that God's will is that they be obedient to parents. 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right' - obey! In the Greek language that word literally means 'to hear under', to hear under. It's not: 'Listen to me!' - you know the way sometimes you lose your temper - 'Listen to me!', that's not what he's talking about. But he's talking about, in a child, an ear that is listening and willing to obey. Not being forced, but a willingness to listen. The verb is in the present imperative tense, which means this: it's continuous. This is an obedience that continues right throughout life, right throughout every decision that a child makes, it is to be in obedience to the godly wisdom of the parent. Now, it's a stronger word than 'wives obey your husbands', because it's a word that implies it is implicit - you must do this. You don't discuss it, like a husband and a wife would reason together about a decision that they are about to make and then the wife must adhere to the husband's final decision over it all, this is different - the child must implicitly obey their parent. Paul is saying first of all, with regards to obedience to parents, that it is a fundamental duty of all children to obey their parents - whether they're Christians or not makes no difference, because the child-parent relationship is ordained of God over all mankind, and this continual obedience must be seen!

Now there's a modifying factor to all this that motivates that obedience in relation to the church of Jesus Christ at Ephesus. And although this is something that relates to all humanity, whether they're saved or unsaved, Paul now begins to narrow this down to the Christian child and the Christian parent. The second thing Paul desires for these children, and it is God's desire for them, is: fellowship with the Lord. 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord' - and what that means is simply what it means for husband to love a wife as the Lord loved the church: it's 'as unto'. Do all things to the glory of God - and what Paul is saying to the children is: 'You're to obey your parents, or your father specifically, unto the Lord'.

Now turn with me to Colossians chapter 3, just over a few pages, and verse 20. And we get again an amplification of this thought from Paul, Colossians 3:20: 'Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord' - so in Ephesians he says 'as unto the Lord', in Colossians 'for it is well pleasing unto the Lord'. So children who obey godly parents are obeying the Lord - and that's the way children ought to see it, as pleasing the Lord. And it's a thing about attitude, and this is what is so important within the book of Ephesians: it's not just the outward appearance, it is the attitude of the heart and the mind that makes the difference before God. It's not like the wee boy whose teacher sent him into the corner of the room to sit down, but he said to himself: 'I'm sitting down on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside'. That's sometimes how we obey God - outwardly - but the attitude within us has failed to be submissive to the lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This is attitude that Paul is talking about, and he is saying: 'Yes, Christians are not released from normal obligations of life' - that parent-child relationship that is across the whole earth, they're not released from that because they're saved. Indeed, we go a step further, if anything the regeneration makes them, or ought to make them, better children within the home. That is God's will for the children. Now, it is not God's will that they obey their parents in sinfulness, because that that would not be 'as unto the Lord'. They're not to obey in sin, but they're to obey the Lord and suffer the consequences - even

if it means to go against their parent's wishes, if they want them to do something sinful, and obey the Lord rather than obeying men. So, they are to obey parents, they are to obey parents 'as unto the Lord'.

Thirdly, Paul shows us that this is a natural righteousness. He says: 'for this is right'. You may think that's obvious for him to say such a thing, but what is he getting at? Well this is the first feature of motivation: why children should obey their parents - 'for it is right'. What Paul is saying is: it's a natural thing, it's built-in in the law of nature, it's ordained of God in creation and this proves the rightness of the action, this proves that it is right to obey parents. The parent brought the child into the world, and that's the natural order, that surely the one that brought the child into the world should be obeyed by the one who has been brought into the world. We see that even in the animal kingdom, it testifies to that natural order of authority and submission. Those who are immature, impulsive and inexperienced should submit to the authority of their parents who are older, wiser and experienced. But sadly, we would be blind in our world today not to see that that is not so - and I do not speak about the church, I speak about the world. We could spend all night speaking about the church, but as we look into the world we see that that fellowship, that natural relationship between a parent and a child is breaking down - and we can see the breaking down of civilisation because of that!

As Warren Wiersbe said: 'The modern version of Ephesians 6 verse 1 is this: 'Parents obey your children, for this will keep them happy and bring peace to the home' - and I add a postscript to that: '...and keep you out of the law courts!' That's reality today, isn't it? Children are taking their parents to court! And this natural rightness that we find here - our third point - it's starting to break down, but that is Paul's first reason why we obey our parents as unto the Lord, because in creation it is naturally right.

Now fourthly, he goes a step further. The second reason why you obey your parents is because it's scripturally right. There is a scriptural adherence, and he quotes from Exodus 20 and verse 12 - from the 10 commandments - and also Deuteronomy 5:16: 'Honour thy father and thy mother'. I think it's interesting that Paul appeals to their knowledge of the law - don't forget he's speaking to the children here, and he quotes this as if they know what it is - and I believe they knew what it was! These children in Ephesus knew what Paul was quoting when he said: 'Honour thy father and thy mother' - they knew, I believe, he was quoting the law of God. Now, although the New Testament teaches us that we are not under the law but under grace, this shows us that the righteousness of the law is still the revelation of God's holiness - that has not changed. We can't scruple the law up and throw it in the bin because we've entered into grace, but the law is still God's revelation of His holiness. We still can't approach it, except live by it by the Spirit of God - and that's important, what they could not do without the Spirit we can do with the Spirit. And Paul is saying that, he is reinforcing that the Lord is important for believers by saying: 'Children, honour thy father and thy mother'. Paul said that in Romans 8:4, that we are to live, as Christians, the law of God by the Spirit of God - he says: 'That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit'. If you and I are walking after the Spirit, the power of God's resurrected Christ is in us to live the law of God!

All the 10 commandments are given forth in the New Testament scriptures, and indeed this commandment: 'Honour thy father and thy mother' was quoted by the Lord Jesus Himself. That shows us that the New Testament believer is to observe these 10 commandments - the only one that is not mentioned is: 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy'. And it's wrong for a New Testament Christian, just the same as an Old Testament believer, to fail to honour their father and their mother. Let's not lose that, we are not under law but grace, but this is still God's standard of holiness and it is still sin to not honour them in our hearts. 'Honour thy father and thy mother' - that word 'honour' literally means 'to estimate' or 'to fix value upon'. That paints a beautiful picture, doesn't it, of honouring father and mother: to value them, to estimate them of high esteem, that's honouring in the truest sense! This honour is the inward attitude leading to the outward obedience of obeying your parents as unto the Lord. It's not just an obedience, but it's an obedience that comes from a deep love, a deep desire and respect and honour to obey your parents. I believe that that

honour goes on right throughout life, I believe it goes into adulthood - when they need you the way that you needed them, that you're there for them and you love them as they loved you.

So, there it is: 'Honour thy father and thy mother' - it's a scriptural adherence. It's not just something natural in nature or in society, but it is something that God has commanded the child of God to follow. Fifthly he tells the children: it is good to obey this will of God because it has resultant blessing. He says the third motivation is because it's for your best interest: 'Honour thy father and thy mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth'. It has a blessing, if children obey their parents as obeying the Lord it will bless them, it's in their best interest to do it! Now notice that the promise that's given here is only the outcome of obeying your parents, it's not the main reason for doing it - the main reason for doing it is that God has commanded it, that's the important thing, because it is right! But if you do what is right - in all things - God will bless you for it. Now you can note this in a general sense if you think about it for a minute - and it's not too hard to think about this - of a child who receives no instruction and no correction from his parents, and that's what we're living in today: children who get no direction in life, no moral perspective or outlook at all.

Think of the implications of that! William McDonald says: 'That child would be personally miserable and socially intolerable'. I can't remember who it was, it's only coming to my mind now, but someone told me this week of an undertaker who buried, last week, seven suicides of young men. Seven. We live in a socially miserable generation, and we live with socially intolerable children - you have to sit on some of them in the children's meeting to make them behave, because in life they haven't been given any direction, they haven't received correction or instruction! And we can see it on a national scale, that the abortion of the family has had it's reaping - and we are seeing the results of the family unit being demolished by government, by state, by religious, established churches and everything! 'It will be well with thee', if you obey your parents, and it will not be well if you disobey.

The fourth motivation and the second blessing that comes from obeying your parents is found in the commandment itself, for the commandment is said to be the first of promise. Exodus 20 verse 12: '...that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee'. Now that's a bit different, if you look at it in verse 3, with what Paul says. Moses says, '...that thou mayest live long on the land' - verse three, Paul says: '...live long on the earth'. He changes the word 'land' to 'earth', because in the book of Exodus the promise was given, to the children of Israel who were wanting to enter the promised land, by God that they would live long literally in that land if they obeyed their father and their mother. But we live in the church age today and that doesn't apply to us, and Paul knows that so he brings in the earth and he makes this a more general promise - but yet still there is the blessing there that, if we obey, we shall be blessed.

What Paul is saying is not that we'll inherit the land, or even the earth, but he is saying this promotes a full life. 'That thou mayest live long on the earth' - in the Old Testament it was literally living long, but now it's something else. Sure you know, and I know, that obedience does not result in longevity - a good son can die young. And because a son or a daughter dies young does not mean that they have died because of disobedience to their parents, but this is what I want you to see: this is a principle, it's not an absolute black and white guarantee, but it's a principle - and the principal here is this: when children obey their parents in the Lord they will escape a great deal of sin and danger, and therefore avoid the things that will threaten to shorten their lives.

If you train up a child in the way that he should go, he'll not go to the pubs, God willing he'll not go to the clubs - but hopefully, hopefully he will go to the church of Jesus Christ, he will be brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord and he will not come across the dangers that this world presents. That is the principle that Paul is writing down here from the Spirit of God, it's true in a general sense that a life of discipline and obedience to God's word and to your father and your mother - who are godly and trying to instruct you and

admonish you in the ways of the Lord - will be conducive to health and long life. But if you rebel, if you're reckless you're in danger of premature death! As Matthew Henry put it: 'This gospel that we preach has its temporal blessings as well as its spiritual' - isn't that right? It's not all about 'pie in the sky when you die', it affects your life now! It is abundant life that God wants to give now, and if we live according to His precepts - this isn't 'health and wealth gospel', but it's the commandment of promise that we will have certain blessings that you cannot have if you're in the world.

Life is not only measured by the quantity of time, and I believe that's not what Paul is meaning here, but rather the quality of experience - that if you want to have true life that obedience to parents, children, will bring enrichment no matter how long your life is, for it will embellish your character traits. If you go with friends to the world and do all the things that the world are doing, you will become a little bit like them - if not all the way. You will form habits if you disobey your parents that will destroy your life! Your character and your personality will change, maybe even the spouse that you meet and marry will change your whole future because you disobey your parents - and the whole point is this: sin robs us! And it robs children who are not obedient to their parents.

The awful condition of children today in our world, I believe largely, is a direct result of rejecting God's word. We don't have time to look at these passages, but in Romans 1 and in 2 Timothy 3 we find that disobedience to parents is a characteristic of the last days that we are living in today. And if you look at those two passages of Scripture you will find [that] the sins that are surrounding disobedience to parents are heinous abominations that you could hardly imagine, or would want to think about! But smack, right in the middle, is disobedience to parents. That shows you how serious it is in the eyes of God, and it tells me this: that by nature a child is totally and utterly depraved. A child is a sinner that needs to be saved by the grace and the blood of Christ, and therefore every single child needs to be instructed by their parents, and the church of Jesus Christ needs to tell them how to be saved.

That is God's will for children: that they obey their parents, that they are in the Lord and obey them as the Lord for it is right, for it is said 'Honour thy father and thy mother, and so it will be well with thee'. But what is God's will for parents? That's what we find in verse 4, he says: 'And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord' - God's will for parents. Paul is telling us this: that if children are left to themselves they'll become rebels. Now a lot of people would say: 'Boy, he's harsh' - you see that's the truth, isn't it? In fact, if any of us are left to ourselves we'll be rebels, if we're not arrested by the grace of God along life's road and converted by His Son, we're servants to sin and slaves to our body and fleshly desires - isn't that right? The wee children are no different if they are left without instruction, this is why Paul tells parents in verse 4: train them, instruct them!

And sadly, as we read the word of God, the Bible records unholy results of men who did not instruct their children and didn't train them. We read of David who neglected Absalom, and then we find later that he pampered Absalom, and later we find a dead Absalom! And no matter how David wept over him, it wouldn't bring him back. He set a bad example and the result was death after Absalom himself had rebelled against his own father. Then you find Eli, don't you? And he failed to discipline his sons, it says in the word of God that he brought disgrace and defeat to Israel. God said, listen, I quote: 'His sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not'. God cursed the land because of it. You read of Isaac, he pampered Esau - and his wife, she showed favouritism to Jacob - and the result was a divided home and a divided nation. And then Jacob, who had been shown favouritism, he was partial over Joseph - remember, he gave him a coat of many colours! And God had to rescue Joseph from a pit because of that favouritism, and God had to take him to Egypt, and God had to make a man out of Joseph!

Instructions and responsibilities are now balanced, and here we have an instruction to the father. It's interesting, look at verse 4, he speaks specifically to the father because the father is the supreme head - God-

given head - of the home. Now what Paul says to fathers is unusual in his day - what he said to children was not unusual, that's the way children were meant to behave in the world in which we are reading here - but this that he says to the parents is very, very strange. The first thing he says is this: do not provoke - '...ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath'. You see, in Paul's day the father was supreme, and when a baby was born the baby was brought before the father and it was set before him, and if the father picked the baby up the baby was accepted into the family, and if the father didn't pick the baby up - believe it or not - it was rejected, it was either sold or given away, and in some cases the baby was taken, set outside the door, the door closed, and the baby would freeze to death in the exposure. Now that was legal! That was the world that Paul is writing to, so you can imagine the impact of it when he tells fathers not to provoke their children! This is a new thing, it's new to this world that the child's feelings should be considered at all!

What Paul is saying again - as he already says with regards to authority, with regards to the authority between wives and husbands, and now children and parents - is this: don't abuse it, fathers. That's what he's saying: 'Provoke not your children to wrath' - don't abuse the authority I've given you, don't use the authority over your children to abuse them. What is to be done is the opposite, you find it in Colossians 3:21: 'Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged'. You see, if you provoke them they'll be discouraged, but that's not what Paul's asking us to do. Paul's saying: 'Don't provoke them, and therefore they will be encouraged!' So many children need encouragement in our world, and the reason - I believe - why Paul addresses the father specifically here is because he is the one who's probably prone to provoke the children more than the mother. Isn't that true?

The word for 'provoke' in Greek means 'exasperate', it means to incite or to frustrate. If you think about it for a moment: what frustrates children? I'll tell you what frustrates them: unreasonable demands, undue harshness, constant nagging. As Montgomery Boice put it: 'Goading their children into a state of perpetual resentment' - how many children have you seen like that? How many children have been sinfully driven from the side of the Lord by a harsh, legalistic tyrant who calls themselves a father? Perhaps it's their way of bolstering their weak ego and their lack of achievements in their life, so they belittle or lord it over their children like a mini-Hitler, to show that they have power, to show that they have strength - and many fathers have an insatiable desire to dominate, because in life they are nobodies in a man's world, so in their family they have to tread their children into the dirt!

That's why, in many homes, we have children with very low self-esteem. Some would say that you hear too much about self-esteem today, and that is true - but you know, Paul writes about self-esteem because he tells husbands to love their wives as they love themselves, as they love their own body. He doesn't tell them to hate their own body, or to hate themselves - if they're going to love their wife they have to love themselves to a certain extent, not in a sinful way. And the child must be loved, the child must know encouragement and self-esteem, they can't have a lack of worth. You provoke a child by saying one thing and doing another - you know what they're like, they can see through you right away, can't they? You provoke a child by blaming and never praising them, by an inconsistent, unfair approach in discipline, by maybe showing favouritism to one child over the other, by making a promise to them and not keeping it, by making light of their problems that they see as very, very great. And, oh, as I look at this I say to myself: 'Boy, how do parents need to be filled with the Holy Spirit to be able to do that!' But you see, that's it - they need to be filled to do it.

Secondly, Paul tells them: don't provoke, but nourish. The word in the Greek for 'nourish' literally means 'to bring up' - or sorry, he says 'nurture' but I have put it down as 'nourish', because that's what it means 'to bring up'. Indeed in Ephesians 5:29 the exact same Greek word is translated 'nourish'. Calvin translated it 'kindly cherish' - you're to kindly cherish the children. Now 'nourish' conjures up in our mind the idea of providing food and shelter and clothing, and that's included and it still is God's ordained responsibility for the husband to provide for the home. But you know, it means more than that, it's talking emotionally and spiritually - that

the husband is to nourish the children by sharing love and encouragement, and the love of God and the word of God. You remember the Lord Jesus Christ as a little boy, it was said in Luke 2:52: '...and Jesus increased in wisdom, stature, favour with God and with man' - that was balanced growth if there was any! It was growth intellectually - He increased in wisdom. It was growth physically - He increased in stature. Spiritually - in favour with God. And socially - in favour with man. Let me tell you this: that our Lord Jesus Christ received the greater deal of that in the home, with a holy mother, and a holy earthly father, and His heavenly Father.

Let me say this: nowhere in the word of God is the upbringing of our children assigned to outside the family unit - nowhere! Many today in this world, in this express world that we live in, give their children to be brought up by strangers who they don't even know, who look after them while their parents go out, perhaps, to work and they don't need to work. They're high-flying, they're earning thousands or they're climbing the ladder, and their family is suffering because of it! I heard of a toddler being taught yoga by the child minder of a believer! We dare not let the world bring up our children, we are to nourish them and cherish them.

Thirdly, we are to discipline them. The word 'nurture' that you have is quite a weak translation, if I can say that, for a stronger translation is 'chasten'. It means instruction, and indeed in Hebrews 12 - you know the passage about disciples, the Lord's children, being chastened - it's exactly the same word. It's the idea of learning through discipline, and it's talking about correction that may be verbal, or indeed corporal. Now, we're getting onto a thorny issue here - for today some psychologists and educators, and children's workers and social workers oppose any corporal punishment at all. They see it as an archaic philosophy of punishment that's outdated, we have evolved beyond that in our mental state and physically speaking. The cry is: 'Let them express themselves! Let them do as they wish! If you discipline them, if you punish them, it will suppress their personalities and perhaps warp their characters' - and sadly even some Christians today now have swallowed this belief that their children will grow up scarred if they are punished.

Well, children are expressing themselves alright. I'm well aware of the backdrop of child abuse in this evil world, and indeed of parents who have taken this principle to Satanic extremes of abuse - but again, let us say this: beware that we do not opt for a knee-jerk reaction! We must beware that we don't throw the baby of biblical corporal punishment out with the bath water of brutality! You see, this is what the church does at times - because the world, or some evil people in the world, go in a certain direction we forget about the whole thing entirely! Now, let me say this, and let me be clear: that a heavy-handed approach to child discipline is forbidden by the word of God. 'Provoke not thy children to wrath' covers it; 'Love them not in anger', lest you injure the body or lest you injure the spirit and they turn away from you or turn away from God.

We're not talking about flying off the handle - and I support any efforts to eradicate such sinful behaviour - but to ban smacking is unbiblical, it is a denial of the word of God and those who ban it will reap what they sow in rebellious children. That's what you find within the word of God, and let me say this: you hear some comparisons of what smacking is like, and I want to say that it's like comparing extracting a rotten tooth with grievous bodily harm! Isn't it? To say that this is physical abuse? And let me go a further step: to say that this is wrong is to accuse God of sin! Now beware, for in Hebrews 12 verse 6 it says this: 'For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth'. Proverbs 13:24: 'He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes'. Is God wrong? Let's discuss this a minute (only I'm going to be the only one speaking, that's the only thing!). Let's think about it: is God wrong, is He? Why do we have to upstage God? Why do we always have to make a better idea? Now I'm not talking about using a cannon to squash a flea or anything like that - Evangelist Brady Wilson said of his mother that she had an old razor strap which hung on a nail in the kitchen and under it was the sign: 'I Need Thee Every Hour' - that's not what I'm talking about. In fact an over use of discipline will be useless at all, won't it? It'll lose the whole impact of the thing! And I'm not saying that if you discipline your child you'll have a model

Christian or a model citizen on the earth, I'm not saying if your child has failed that you didn't do anything right - but what I'm saying here is: in the word of God there's a principle and it means this: if you want to give your child the greatest opportunity of development in every area of life, like the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, you'll discipline!

Speaking of disciplining your children, Susannah Wesley - the mother of 17 children, including John and Charles - said this: 'The parent who studies to subdue self-will', studying to subdue self-will, 'in his child works together with God in renewing and the saving of his soul. The parents who indulges it does the Devil's work, makes religion impractical, salvation unattainable, and does all that in him lies to damn his child, soul and body, forever'.

Fourthly he says 'instruct'. The word is 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord' - and that word 'admonition', as we finish, simply means 'to instruct', 'to encourage'. And the book of Proverbs is full of it, isn't it? It is a picture of a father, encouraging, sharing wise counsel with his own son. That is simply saying this: we must instruct our children! If we don't teach them the world's going to teach them, and - oh - how the world wants to get them! And oh, how the devil is out for the family today! He wants the home.

But here, as we end, is the instruction of God to us. Deuteronomy 6:7: 'Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up'. Now listen, this is the question: do we teach our children the word of God and do we talk to them about it? As Matthew Henry said: 'Instruct them to fear sinning. Inform them of and excite them to the whole of their duties toward God'. It'll not give you the perfect child, but it will give them the greatest opportunity of living a godly life in a sinful world.

Our Father, we are so conscious in a sinful world that even holy things are made to look sinful. We are conscious also, our God, that it is difficult in our day to live holy and godly in Christ Jesus. It is difficult to be a parent, it is difficult to be a child - but Lord, we thank Thee for the Spirit of God, and we pray that we may be filled by Him so that we may be able to walk by the Spirit and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. We pray Lord, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that You would make our homes holy places where Christ is exalted, and where the light of the Gospel can be seen in changed and holy lives. For we pray these things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - January 2001

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Christ In The Home - Chapter 4

"The Christian At Work"

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Ephesians 6:5-9

- 1. Christian Servants Obey (verses 1-3)**
 - a. Respectfully (verse 5)
 - b. Conscientiously (verse 5)
 - c. Spiritually (verses 5-6)
 - d. Gladly (verse 7)
 - e. Rewardingly (verse 8)
- 2. Christian Masters Rule (verse 9)**
 - a. As Servants Serve
 - b. Without Threats
 - c. Under Lordship
 - d. Impartially

Ephesians 6, and we're coming this evening to the end of our passage, and let me remind you that - as we often say - the chapter outlines and verses that we have in all the English versions of the Bible, it's important to note this: that the Bible was not written in English, the Bible was written in Greek, ancient Greek, biblical Greek. Therefore these outlines that we have of verses and chapters are there to help us - it would be a hard job, wouldn't it, to find passages and verses without them, and thank God for the men that devised them - but sometimes (and we must remember that it was men that devised them) they are devised incorrectly with the gist of the passage. We found that in chapter 5, that there is a passage that begins in verse 21 of chapter 5, and it doesn't end until verse 9 in chapter 6. So the chapter division is a little bit misleading - it's important to note that.

So, we are finishing what has been a sequence of verses from verse 21, right down to verse 9 of chapter 6. The topic and the theme is found in verse 21 of chapter 5: 'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God'. So, we've looked at wives, who have to submit to their husbands. We've looked at children, who must submit to their parents. We are looking now at slaves, or servants, who must submit to their masters. So, there is the theme, and we're carrying it out again this evening in the will of God.

Let's read from verse 5 of chapter 6, through to verse 9: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him".

Now we enter, as I have already said, the third and the final sphere of this theme that Paul gives us, of submission. Here we have the submission of servants to masters, or to put it into our modern language: the submission of employees to employers. Now it's natural that, as Paul deals in chapter 5 and chapter 6 with the Christian household, that he should include this relationship between the servant and the master - because, in the ancient world, that relationship was incorporated within the home. Every house, almost, was affected by the master-slave relationship. It is estimated that there were 60 million slaves in the Roman

Empire as a whole - 60 million! That is a third of the population of each of the largest cities within the Roman Empire, including Rome, Corinth, and the city that we're reading about tonight: the city of Ephesus. One-third of those populations were made up of slaves! There would have been masters as well in Ephesus, as well as those slaves, so you can see the relevance of what Paul is writing to this church in Ephesus.

We read in the New Testament of Philemon who was a master, he was in Colossae, within the Colossian Church, and he was a master - his slave was Onesimus. Most of the people that Paul is writing to were either slaves at the moment he was writing to them, or they had been slaves, they were ex-slaves now - or as the Bible calls them: freed men. Most of them at one point had been in that master-slave relationship. Now, it's important for us at the beginning of this study, as an introduction, to understand what New Testament slavery really was. To understand this passage of scripture we must move away, and clear away, some misconceptions that people have had.

Many think that New Testament slavery was open to extreme exploitation - that slaves were mistreated, and great violence was done to them - that is simply not true as you read the New Testament and read historical records. There was the teaching, however, of Aristotle who believed that a slave was merely a tool, that he or she was an inanimate object, a thing, that could be used by their master for a desired end. Indeed, Roman law, to a certain extent, enforced that by saying that a slave was not a person, a slave was a thing to be owned, to be bought, and - if need be - to be sold. He was not a legal person in the eyes of Roman law, and because of that some slaves were mistreated, but it wasn't a general rule within the Roman Empire. Some who were mistreated was the slave of Augustus - we read in historical writs about him: he was crucified because he killed a pet quail! His master crucified him.

There were other mistreatments of slaves, and because of that we read about a slave rebellion started by Spartacus - and maybe you've seen the film all about how the slaves rose up out of their mistreatment, their maltreatment, and rose up for their rights. But let me say this: that conception of slavehood is pre-Christian. Spartacus was before the birth of Christ, and all this maltreatment and mistreatment of slaves was before our Lord Jesus Christ was born, and certainly was before the epistle that we read before us. Slavery changed greatly within that period, and by now - the period in which we are reading, the book of Ephesians - things had changed magnanimously. Under the Romans most slaves now could hope to be free before old-age. In fact, in Augustus Caesar's time he had to curb the releasing of slaves simply because too many owners were releasing them! Indeed we learn that 50% of all slaves in the Roman Empire at this time were released before they were 30 years of age, they were given their freedom. If, perhaps, a slave decided to stay with their master, he had the liberty of, in fact, owning his own property, and he himself - if he wished - could have his own slaves! He could even invest money in property, or land. He could sell that property, and Roman law said he could buy his own freedom back.

So, you see how this slavery is, perhaps, not as we conceived. Some might say: 'Well, there was still social class distinction' - well, to a certain extent there was, but generally speaking there was no social class distinction between slaves. In fact, slaves regularly were given the same social class as their master - so if their master was upper-class, his slave was upper-class also. Indeed, we read that he often dressed in the same way as his master, and if you were walking down the street you would hardly be able to tell the difference between slave and master - they were put in the one class distinction. In fact, some slaves even sold themselves that they might obtain Roman citizenship.

So, we cannot make the mistake - and this is what often people do - of comparing Roman slaves with the slaves that, perhaps, we had hundreds of years ago in the United Kingdom, or indeed with the slaves in the past century that has gone by - African American slaves in the United States of America. You cannot compare the two together, because slavery - believe it or not - in this particular age that we're reading of within the New Testament, was much more humane and much more civilised. Now the Bible is attacked all

the time, isn't it? Every chance that every man, or scholar, or theologian - liberal - can get, they attack the word of God and try to tear it apart. This is one of the ways in which the word of God has been attacked: it is condemned because it does not condemn slavery anywhere within the word of God. Although the thrust of the gospel message is against everything, and every philosophy, that hides behind the precept of slavery, still men come out and say: 'Well, the Bible doesn't condemn it'. In fact, believers are described as being the slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we must notice - believers - first of all, that every single place where the gospel message has penetrated, and the Spirit of God has moved, slavery has disappeared and the abuse of slaves has gone. Not by revolution of morals, but rather by reformation, spiritually speaking. Now, to the Bible's accusers I would say this: in this passage that we have read, from verse 21 of chapter 5 right through to now verse 9 of chapter 6, both the marriage relationship and the parent-child relationship are said to be instituted by God. Isn't that right? God instituted both of them, but He doesn't institute slavery. Look at the passage, it is not there - we must note that tonight as we study this passage. There are four other things that I want to share with you tonight, for any who would accuse the word of God of being with double standards here, and ask the question: 'Why does the word of God not condemn slavery?'.

First of all: the word of God here does not condemn it because there were positive reforms in action, in Roman government at this time, reforming slavery. In other words: it was already happening! So why would the Bible condemn, or even suggest, social changes when those social changes were already taking place? Secondly: the practice of slaves and masters in society in general, with both the masters and the slaves, was not considered evil - it was considered the norm. Thirdly: the condemnation of slavery would have brought the economic structure of this present society down around the people's ears! This is the way society was ran, with masters and slaves. If Christianity had begun to condemn slavery - knowing right well that the positive mechanisms to reform slavery were already coming in in government, knowing well that the gospel message would penetrate these people and change their views of slavery - the Christians would have been seen to be economically subversive. Masters would have been launched into poverty, and servants would have been begging bread - that is not a message that would commend Christ to anyone, is it? But fourthly, and most importantly, and foundationally: the brotherhood of Christianity would eventually exterminate slavery. The fact, as Paul has been saying within this epistle, we are all one in Christ - there is no longer any bond or free - and once that great revolutionary, converting, regenerating message would penetrate the hearts and minds of unbelievers and convert them, there would be a massive change in society that would mean that slavery would go beyond the pale. The Gospel - hallelujah! - the gospel eventually would deal a deadly blow to slavery!

I hope that gives you your answer. The answer is simply this, 1 Corinthians chapter 1 - Paul's message, and subsequently our message, is the Gospel. '[I came] not to baptise' - not that baptism is wrong, but that was not his primary goal, his primary goal was that he would preach the gospel, preach the cross - and that's what we must do today. Ultimately it was that preaching of the gospel that led to the downfall of slavery. It wasn't his chief end to pull down slavery in society, it wasn't Paul's chief end to reform the Roman Empire - but I'll tell you this much: just as Wesley and Whitefield in their preaching resulted in the abolition of slavery in the United Kingdom, the abolition of child labour, and the elevation of women, and the care of the needy, the gospel message is revolutionary and reformatory to all society! We must grasp this, and this is what enthuses me as I study these verses of Scripture: that in the home, in the marriage relationship, in the child-parent relationship, in the school relationship, within the church of Jesus Christ, wherever we live our lives, and even in the workplace, the gospel of Jesus Christ and the message of the word of God turns everything upside-down!

We must note that in no sense does Paul confuse a 'social system gospel' with the spiritual order of the church of Jesus Christ. We do not believe in a social gospel, but there are certain things that are required of

us as believers, the way we ought to live: in charity towards the poor and so on, that we read within the New Testament. But the crux of the matter is this: if you preach the gospel in the spirit of the word of God, and the Spirit of God, those effects will come into being! So then, to understand slavery is not just to disprove the Bible's critics, but as we come to study this topic it also brings the importance of understanding the parallels that there are between the slave-master relationship, and between the relationships that we work in employment today, between the boss and the employee. It's so enthusing - isn't it? - to realise that this message directly applies to you and me today.

So, let's look at what Paul says first. First of all he talks to Christian servants, and he tells them: 'Christian servants, obey!'. Verse 5: 'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh' - now the word for 'servant' there is the word: 'bond slave'. But this principle applies to more than just slaves, it applies to all - as I have already said - in the servant/employee relationship. Although, as we have said, the New Testament doesn't condemn slavery, it says more than that - because it speaks first of all to the slaves! Now, we noted this last week, when he's talking in the marriage relationship who does he talk to first? Wives, those who are to submit. When he talks about the parent-child relationship who does he address first? The children, those who are to submit. And now, as he comes to the slaves in this society that he is living in and writing to, although the Bible doesn't condemn slavery, he gives them the respect and the honour to address the slaves first - those who are to be submissive.

It thrills me, you know, to think that the Bible has more to say to slaves than it has to masters and to kings. I believe the reason for that, Paul tells us, again in 1 Corinthians 1:26: '...not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called' - and in fact, if we were to be honest and look at it carefully, most Christians are probably found in the lower socio-economic brackets of this world. Again - here we go again - the Bible, and the word of God, and the Spirit of God, is turning upside-down the value system, the status system, of this old world! So he addresses slaves first - those who are lowest in the eyes of the world, yet those who cost the blood of Christ to buy to Himself for His own purchased possession.

These instructions are effective - let me say that. If you put these into your life they will make a difference in your work relationship, because in the first century - what we're reading about here - they made a great difference in the early church of Christianity. We learn from historical books that Christian slaves were a higher price than heathen slaves! Why? Because they were better slaves! Why? Because they were carrying out the directive from the Spirit of God that we find within the word of God here - and surely that must be the case? That we as employees, or employers, should be a better employee or a better employer - why? Because we have tasted of the grace of God, and we have got the life of the Lord Jesus Christ within us. You can see that, if you wish, if you read the book of Philemon. Onesimus ran away from his master - Onesimus the slave running from his master Philemon - and he came across Paul. He was converted by the grace of God, Paul sent him back, because Paul was inferring that if you are now a converted slave, you must be a better slave! You know the story, he went back - and here was Paul's injunction upon the master: 'You must treat Onesimus, now, as if you were receiving me'.

We will see the relevance of that as we go down this passage, and later look at God's directive to masters. But what Paul is saying, as we look at the slave, is this: as a Christian our standard always - young people, listen to this now - must be higher than the world's! Always! It's got to make the difference, it's got to be God's standard of holiness. Paul talks about that in relation to these slaves. First of all: in respect. Look at your first point: Christian servants ought to obey respectfully, verse 5: 'Be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ'. First of all: 'obey your masters according to the flesh' - now, that means this in the worldly sense, the employer has the jurisdiction in the physical and in the mental realm over the employee. In other words, your boss has jurisdiction over you! Paul is not saying that because you're now a Christian all those social relationships just come down - it's not the Sixties liberation, you know what I'm talking about, of burning certain things to be

liberated of everything! That is not what the liberty that we have in Christ is - yet there is still that fleshly relationship between the employer and the employee, but what Paul is saying here is this: it is according to the flesh, and although he has jurisdiction over you physically and mentally, he cannot dictate to you with regards to the spiritual realm.

The employer cannot order the conscience, he cannot tell you what to believe and what not to believe, he cannot tell you how to carry out your religious convictions at all! He has no jurisdiction there, because he is the master according to the flesh. Therefore, even though he is according to the flesh, Paul still says - verse 5, look at it, that we are to obey him: 'with fear and trembling'. Now that's not a servile fear, an abject terror of shaking in your boots, it's not: 'Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full sir' - that's not what Paul is trying to say. It's a dutiful respect, it's honour for a boss, or for a master, of his position and his authority - and it should be a fear, not a shaking in your boots, but a reverent respect of honouring that position of the employer.

You see, what brings this home - and the fact that it does relate to the Christian home in the first century - is the fact that many slaves lived in the family home. Now you can imagine the friction, at times, that must have caused - for the slave and the master to live together - and even, from the perspective of the slave, the familiarity that bred contempt for his master. Imagine living with your boss every hour of the day! That's what we're talking about here - and there could enter into the heart of even a Christian slave some resentment, even an inward sarcastic resentment that said: 'Whenever I get a chance to get one over you, I will get one over you!'. The likelihood was, inferred I believe by Paul, that some disobedient slaves had brought shame to the name and the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ because of their disrespect towards their master. Indeed that's why, I believe, Paul wrote to Timothy and instructed him and exhorted him to tell all the slaves in his congregation, 1 Timothy 6:1: 'Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed'.

Now that may easily be seen - in the case of a Christian slave and an unbelieving master - how the testimony of the Lord could be dragged down if a Christian slave does not honour Christ in the face of an unbeliever, and witness to him through his life. But can you imagine, now, taking it a step further - how this can be intensified if the slave is a believer and the master is a believer? Now, you know what I'm talking about, because sometimes within the work relationship the resentment can become greater when there is that spiritual relationship of the Christian brotherhood, if it is used in the wrong way. Think about this: perhaps the slave, in the assembly, is a teacher and an elder - and perhaps the master, in the assembly, is just a member. And when they come into this work relationship there is a resentment because of their capacity, and their responsibility, in the assembly, and vice versa - and the friction that could be caused there, the problems, the resentment.

Paul has set out how, in the church, barriers are to be broken down - haven't we read that in the book of Ephesians? How there is no longer any wall of partition between any of us, yet Paul is saying here: that is what it is like in the church, but if you are a believer in the workplace you must abide by those instituted relationships of master and servant. You must fit those obligations that the world puts upon you, and you must fit them to the glory of Christ and His name. That is why Paul went on to Timothy in the second verse of chapter 6 of 1 Timothy: 'And they that have believing masters', the relationship between a believing slave and a believing master, 'let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort', Timothy. As one writer put it: 'There can be no place in the Christian employees life for subtle insubordination towards his employer, or for cleverly concealed contempt or sardonic humour' - no place! It must be respect!

Secondly, Christian servants obey conscientiously. Verse 5: '[with] singleness of your heart, as unto Christ'. Now that phrase: 'singleness of heart' is beautiful, and a lot of modern translations have wrecked it by trying to get the meaning across, and they have lost the idiom, have lost the metaphorical description, of what Paul

is communicating. He is saying 'singleness of heart', he's talking about conscientiousness, putting your eye on the thing and going for the goal. In other words, to put it in contemporary language: 60 minutes work for every hour of pay! That's difficult, isn't it? I would concur with many that the Protestant work ethic - so-called - has died with the Protestant doctrine. The old doctrine is dead and so is the work ethic, it no longer applies. But what Paul is saying here is that you need to be conscientious as a Christian slave, singleness of heart - in other words: sincerity, sincerely, an undivided mind in your work, no ulterior motives or hypocrisy.

You know what it's like when an employee is going to move on in a week or two from now - you know what it's like. Maybe you're a boss, I don't know, but you know that their heart really isn't in the job where they are, sure it's not? It's in the next post, it's in the next place - well, what Paul is talking about is the opposite of that! Singleness of heart - that you are present, body, soul and spirit, as you are working as a slave or as a servant for your employer - that your mind and your heart is there. What is the key to that? How can you do that? I know you're saying in your mind: 'Well, how is that possible?'

Well, here it is, thirdly: it's spiritually possible. That is obedience, as a servant, spiritually - because as Paul says: it is unto Christ. Verse 5: '...as unto Christ' - that's the only way that you can respect your employer, that's the only way that you can be conscientious: by being obedient spiritually.

Now, let's just say this in a digression: that tells me that there can be no distinction between the secular and the spiritual. You can't do it. You can't say: 'This is my business world, or this is my employment world, and this is my Christian world', because Paul just blows it out of the water with what he's just said. Your employment has to be unto Christ, and he is saying this: even in your work, your menial task - whatever it may be - if it is a good work, it can be done for Christ. Now there's a term that is bandied about within Christian circles: 'full time service'. Now I know it's an expression of convenience for those who are evangelists, and missionaries, and pastors, and so on - but it's not accurate, it's not scriptural, because Paul is saying here that we are all in full time service for the Lord, for we are all to be working as unto Christ! All that we do should be for the Lord Jesus Christ, it should be to glorify Him, and it should be to win the lost. The lowest task, it may be, becomes a love song of praise to the Lord Jesus when we do it as unto the Lord.

I just finished this over the weekend - a little book - and I would recommend it to all of you. Now I warn you, it's a 17th Century book by a monk - this is before the Reformation, now, so don't be throwing me out because of this! They hadn't any more light than this - a French monk by the name of Brother Lawrence, it is called 'The Practice Of The Presence Of God'. The whole point of the book is that every moment of every day we can know the presence of God in our life if we concentrate on Him, if we shut out every other thought of anything else and just concentrate on Him. But one of the things that Brother Lawrence says within the book - and let me say this: he worked in a kitchen, he peeled potatoes, he cut carrots and brussel sprouts, and boiled them and cooked them, and served the monks. He wasn't any big preacher or anything like that - that was his daily service day-by-day, and he said this much: as he worked in the kitchens, even if he were called to lift a piece of straw from the ground, he would do it for the love of God - and that's how he practised the presence of God: by doing everything unto the Lord.

As unto the Lord! Paul goes on - amplifies it - look at it, verse 6: 'Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers'. That word 'eyeservice' is related to the word 'servant' in verse 5, 'Servants obey your masters' - it's derived from the same word 'eye-service'. What we could translate it like is this: 'eye-slaves'. How many 'eye-slaves' are there in relation to employment? Watching every move of the boss, not slacking when the boss isn't looking - that's not being an 'eye-slave' - remembering that there is an all-seeing Master, there is One who sees everything, all-knowing, all-wise, almighty, and He is always looking!

You remember when you were at school and you were told to do push-ups, the P.E. teacher turned around and you took a breather! Isn't that what we're talking about? I remember in the swimming pool, you had to

do so many widths of the pool. I got halfway, and when he turned his back I went back again! That's what we do, isn't it? 'Eye-slaves' - when that person of authority isn't looking we con them, theoretically, out of work! William McDonald says this: 'The Christian's standards of performance should not vary according to the geographical location of the foreman' - isn't that right? The Lord has no use - and I say it so often, as we look at many passages of Scripture - He has no place for lazy people! Indeed, that's what the parable of the talents tells us. The servant who did nothing and buried his master's talent in his absence, was told by the Lord: 'Thou wicked and slothful servant'.

But how are they to do it? They are to do it as servants of Christ. Look at verse 6: do it as servants, slaves, of Christ. Verse 7 says as serving the Lord, not men. Verse 8 says it is the Lord that will reward you - it's to be unto the Lord! That's the great need of today, that we work unto the Lord, that we serve the Lord in our workplace. Think of what is possible: it is possible for the housewife to cook a dinner as if the Lord were going to dine with them! It's possible for the teacher to educate children, doctors and nurses to treat patients, solicitors to help clients, accountants to audit books, secretaries to type letters, shop assistants to serve the public, builders to build buildings, dustmen to empty bins, to the glory and to the service of the Lord! It's all to do with attitude, that's the key: if you're doing it as unto the Lord.

It's like the three men that were building a cathedral, and a passer-by asked the first man: 'What are you doing?'. He said: 'I'm chipping stones'. He asked the second man: 'What are you doing?', and he says: 'I'm earning wages'. He said to the third man: 'What are you doing?', and he said: 'I'm building a great cathedral'. You see the difference in attitude? As unto the Lord, and he goes on, verse 6: 'doing the will of God from the heart'. Do we work with a sincere desire to please the Lord? That makes a days work a holy sacrament! An act of sacred worship to go out to your work in the morning, brings untold glory to His name!

Fourthly, he says: do it gladly, obey gladly - 'With good will doing service'. In other words, we shouldn't feel an obligation to do it, any element of 'have to do' within our work, there should be no inward seething of resentment because you have to do your work. But he says it should be cheery, it should be willing, with gladness and pleasantness - and even if your master is harsh and unreasonable, it brings great glory to Christ if you even obey him in the Lord in that measure. That means this: there are to be no Christian sourpusses, none of them! There's no room for that within this passage of Scripture. There's no room for the attitude of the father whose son asked him: 'Daddy, why do all the idiots come out when you're driving?' - you know what I'm talking about? The attitude! What a motivation for a mother and a father in the drudgeries of life, for a husband trying to keep the budget afloat in the midst of ever soaring cost of living - what a motivation, that you can do it all to the glory of God! That's hard, but that's the life that we are called to live in Christ.

Fifthly, obedience is to be done by the slave or the employee rewardingly. The main incentive is not the reward, the main incentive is that it is to glorify the Lord and be as unto the Lord. But this is the outcome, and this is another resultant incentive to obeying in the Lord - that every good work that you do as unto the Lord, God will reward. He doesn't reward in status, He doesn't reward whether you're bond or free - He says that: 'whether bond or free' - but He rewards when we do works that are unpleasant, perhaps, works that are not enjoyable, works perhaps that deep down gall us in some sense. But when we bring ourselves to do it as unto the Lord, respectfully, conscientiously, spiritually, gladly, we will do it rewardingly - He will reward us. What is done for Him, He always rewards.

But secondly, and finally: what does Paul say to the Christian master? We've said already that Christianity doesn't change the social distinctions, it doesn't do that - it's not the hippy movement. But what it does do is: it changes the heart. It changes the heart within society, so that that heart change is seen so effectively around, and it changes the responsibility of masters towards their servants. How do you guard against violence on the shop floor, or yelling in the office, ulcers in the stomach and nervous breakdowns on your medical record? How do you guard against all that? The answer is: you follow Ephesians! As a Christian,

you follow Ephesians - and first of all, as a master, if a master you are, you do as the servants would do to you. Look at verse 9: 'And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him'. Do as the servants would do to you, do the same things unto them!

Now, this is mutual, isn't it? We've see this right throughout all these relationships in this passage. First of all, the husband and the wife: 'Wives obey your husband in the Lord', but then there is a reciprocal love of the husband, to submit to the wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. Do you see it? Reciprocal! 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord', but then, 'Parents, provoke not your children to wrath' - there's that reciprocal, mutual responsibility in love. Now we come to this: 'Slaves, servants, employees, obey your masters in the Lord', 'Masters, do the same!'. It's not a one-up-manship, it's not a dictatorship, but it's doing as you would have them do unto you. Treat them as you would wish to be treated as an employer, don't exploit them, don't think - like Aristotle - of your employees as hands, but do what Boaz did in the book of Ruth chapter 2 and 4. When he greeted his workers we read he said this: 'The Lord be with you', and they replied: 'The Lord bless thee'. Now that means that that was a spiritual man, as a master he was sensitive to the needs of his workers and even the stranger Ruth when she came into his working field. There was a mutual respect and a desire to glorify God. How many times have you heard this: 'My boss is meant to be a Christian, but you'd never know it'? You see that's what Paul is writing against here. He is saying this, listen: if you want respect as a boss, you show it. If you want sincerity, you show sincerity and honesty. If you want conscientiousness, you show it. If you want pleasantness, you be pleasant, you look after the welfare of your people. Do unto them - golden rule - as you would have them do unto you.

Secondly: without threats. Christian masters rule without threats. Look at verse 9: 'forbearing and threatening' - without those things. Now, in the Roman Empire at this time, a master could kill his slave if he wanted to - he could give his slave a beating, but he could actually kill him. Now that didn't actually happen most of the time, because it was too costly to kill him because he probably couldn't afford another one. But the point of it is this: that if he couldn't kill him - sticks and stones, the old story - he threatened him, or he forbore him in the sense that he could abuse him with his tongue, using threatening language. But Paul is saying here: 'No bullying behaviour, don't behave like an arrogant overlord' - forbearing threatening, without threats.

Thirdly he says this, like all these relationships of submission, you're to do it under the lordship of Christ. Now we get back to this every week, because Paul brings us to it. Under the lordship, knowing - look at verse 9 - that your master also is in heaven. The Christian master and boss has to always remember that they are not the final authority, that they have another Master, one in heaven, and they are His slave and His servant. No matter what the relationship is in the workplace, there is a spiritual equity, they are spiritual equals in the sight of God - and even if there is that authority in the workplace, they will both answer to God in the end. The servant, the master, will give an account to God on the same level that as sinners saved by the grace of God. Now imagine the sanctifying influence that that is in the workplace - imagine that! Imagine the impact upon your employees, or upon your boss, because you see God as your final Judge. If you're a boss it means that you'll pay them their wages, it means that you care about them even in their afflictions, in their illnesses, you should be concerned about their family welfare - and this, let me say, is true socialism. This is true socialism - not the abolishing of distinctions, but the levelling of all men under Christ! Ultimately, at the end of it all this whole passage could be summed up in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the rule that He lived His life by: the chief is the servant of all. As He said, 'Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant', and a good master on the earth will be a servant of heaven.

Fourthly: the Christian master will rule impartially. That means this: 'Neither', look at verse 9, 'is there respect of persons with him'. So if there is no respect of persons with God, you don't show any respect of persons in the workplace. No favours, in other words there is equity before God in the judgement of God

when we will all stand before that Great White Throne. When we stand before the judgement seat of Christ, we're all equal.

In conclusion, let me say this: employees, employers, there is no option - no option. There is no distinction between secular and spiritual, it is implored upon you to do this as the child of God. Think of how many Christians that it has been said of them: 'They are murder to work for'. I hear this around the land, of Christian employers: they would get blood out of a stone! Think of how many bosses and fellow workers who have become opposed to the gospel because of their slacking Christian employees and a bad testimony within the workplace. Think of the impact it would have if we all lived as we should live! And how is that? The point of the whole of this passage, as we have been looking at it: be filled with the Spirit! And if you are filled with the Spirit, you will do all things to the glory of God.

Let's pray together - and as you bow your head, we all lack in this area, we would be liars to say that we are without sin. We all need to redeem the time more, and if you feel that lack within your life, why not come before the Lord now and just say: 'Lord, I confess this before you, and I ask you Lord, to help my weakness. Cleanse me from it, and give me the power to live as I ought to live as an employee or as an employer. Give me the strength to dare to do what is right'.

Our Father, we thank Thee for the word of God and its uncompromising standard. We thank Thee that there is no room for slacking. Lord, it's difficult - we do not undermine that, or underestimate how hard it is to follow it - yet Lord, at times we only find it hard because we're trying to do it in the flesh. But help us to walk in the Spirit, to be filled with the Spirit, and we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

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