



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Ephesians 5:22-33

“Paul and Marriage Relationship” -- TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for this privilege of prayer. We think on in the Epistle to the Ephesians and remember the Apostle's exhortation to pray always, and to pray without ceasing. And we thank Thee for the privilege of lifting our hearts and minds to Thee and discussing with Thee the things that concern us and concern the entire church of Jesus Christ, in fact, concern this world.

We thank Thee for the privilege of fellowship and communion. And we remember the covenants of the Scriptures lead on to that great truth that we are Thy people and Thou art our God. We know that is the end of all of the redemptive work. And we pray that in our study of the Scriptures we may remember that and think of the Scriptures as a means to a deepening fellowship and relationship to Thee. We pray, Lord, that our experience of the life of God may grow each day that we live. We look forward to the time when we shall see our Savior face to face and be with him throughout the ages of eternity. In the meantime, we thank Thee for the Scriptures which are our guide and standard of life, which reveal to us the faith and practice which please Thee.

And we pray, Lord, that as we consider another section of Paul's letter to that group of believers in the First Century who lived in Asia Minor, that we might think his thoughts after him as he has thought his after Thee. We commend to Thee each one present, and we ask Lord that this would a spiritually enriching time for each of us.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] We're turning to Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 22 through verse 33, one of the greatest of the sections in the Bible on the subject of marriage. And that's our subject: Paul and the marriage relationship.

We've said a number of things about the Epistle to the Ephesians. We've said, for example, that it is Paul's most sublime epistle. It is also the epistle of the one body. That

is one of the great truths that the Apostle has set forth. In chapter 2 and verse 16 he says that Jesus Christ came that he might reconcile both (that is Jew and Gentile) unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.

It’s in Ephesians that we have the greatest expansion of the doctrine of the church as the Body of Christ. Paul also speaks of that in chapter 3 verse 6 when he says that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body – again, [the] same body with the Jews and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel. Then in chapter 4 verse 4, he states it directly, again: “there is one body.”

Now this doctrine of the body is very important for Ephesians, and it’s one of the fundamental truths from which the Christian life is to develop. In fact, this creed of the one body is to find its issue in the conduct of the church as those who are members of one body. We are a new man, and a new life should issue from that relationship, and it should be a life characterized by unity. It should be characterized by mutual dependence: one upon another. So, the creed is to issue in a certain kind of conduct.

Alexander Pope was one of the foremost poets and satirists of the 18th Century, and in one of his works he says:

“For creeds and forms let senseless bigots fight,
His can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.”

Well, of course, he was wrong in saying that. The apostles, as the Bible teaches, [say] that our conduct is something that should arise out of our creed.

We might think that the Apostle, having set forth now the high calling of Christians in the first three chapters of Ephesians, and then having discussed the walk of the believer, and having reached something of a climax in chapter 5 verse 21 by saying submitting ourselves, one to another, speaking of the holiness of the life that we are to live as Christians, might’ve seemed natural for Paul to pass on and discuss the heavenlies. Because he’s discussing the eternal purpose of God, so it might have seemed, well, it’s about time for Paul to discuss that eternal purpose of God as it pertains to the heavenlies. He will do that in the sixth chapter.

But here he descends to one of the most earthly kinds of things that everyone of us become involved in at one time or another. And that, of course, is marriage. Someone might say, “But is not marriage a training ground?” Well, yes, marriage is training ground. And marriage is one of the relationships into which most of enter with a view to ultimately developing our spiritual life. It’s an occasion for that.

We have had some most interesting changes in the customs of marriage over the past 15 or 20 years. I have before me an old article that appeared in the religion section of *Time* magazine that appeared just a little over ten years ago, when strange things were happening when people got married.

This article begins with, “the bride wore nothing.” And neither did the groom. Nor, for that matter, did the officiating cleric: a minister of the religious diploma mill known as the Universal Life Church. The ceremony was as stark as the apparel. Dropping a stick before the couple, the pastor pronounced the legal essentials in mod vernacular: “You’re married, as long as you dig it.”

Well, now, there were many strange things that happened with reference to marriage. We actually, believe it or not, had a ballet dancer on the platform of Believer’s Chapel, not too many years ago. The wedding was nothing like this, of course, and I’m not trying to make that suggestion. But nevertheless, we did have a ballet dancer or two performing before the ceremonies took place.

But then, there were many other things that happened. For example, there was one couple who were Roman Catholics who, with the approval of the priest, decided not to have a nuptial mass. Instead, the whole assembly read “On Love” from Kaniel Gebron’s *The Prophet*, and then the epistle and the Gospel which were usually read in the ordinance of the sacrament of marriage in the Catholic ceremony, were read by Jewish and Jesuit friends, respectively. Then there were some other readings from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the anti-Nazi Protestant martyr and theologian, and John F. Kennedy.

And then, there was a marriage not too long ago, in which two people were being married, and they accepted the offer of an old friend to be their paraclete, or their special adviser, and supporter of their union. Half a dozen lines were written in to their Unitarian ceremony, formally requesting the friend to accept his uncommon role. And then the girl said, “Many young people no longer look to their parents for assistance, to do so is often too emotionally complicated. We look instead to our best friends. To have a friend promise to be the paraclete of your marriage makes all kinds of sense.”

Then, another recent wedding took place in a fish tank. The bride and the groom wore diving gear. And they were married in that way.

Some very interesting marriages. One of the most interesting to me was one performed by the pastor of the Glide Memorial Methodist Church in San Francisco. If you know anything about this church, it is a church that has become the possession of homosexuals. And there is a man who has been there for some period of time – as far as I know he’s still there – he was...when he performed the marriage ceremony he just sat

down in front of the couple and talked about things in general. You know, we see a lot of informality in our marriage ceremonies now; well, this was the ultimate. He just sat down with them and talked unceremoniously with them about their lives, and he would conclude by casually saying, “You’re married.” And one couple said, “We’re married! You’ve blown our minds!” Well, I think a lot of other people’s minds, also.

Fortunately, in recent years, we’ve seen a change. Instead of the mod kinds of marriages we used to see ten years ago, couples have discovered that it’s really more satisfying in the long run to have a more traditional kind of service, that’s more significant and more meaningful for them. And they’re much but able to relate, particularly if they are Christians, to the truths of the word of God.

So, the Apostle here talks about the marriage relationship and gives, I think, some important guidance in that particular relationship. Now, he speaks first of subjection, then he talks about the devotion – the relationship of the husband to the wife, and finally he concludes in the 33rd verse with something of a resume of what he’s been saying.

Let’s turn now to verse 22, 23 and 24 in which the Apostle speaks of subjection: the relationship of the wife to the husband:

“Wives (Paul writes), submit yourselves unto your own husband, 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 Savior of the Body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”

The Apostle’s word is very plain. It’s: wives, submit. Wives, be in subjection.

There was a professor one time who said, “Marriage is an educational institution in which a man loses his Masters [laughs]—well, I messed that up—he loses his Bachelor’s degree without acquiring a Master’s degree.” Well, the wife’s responsibility is: submit.

Now when the Apostle says, “Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands,” he does not intend by this to suggest in any way the inferiority of a wife to a husband, or of a female to a male. I don’t really know why that ought to need debate in our day, because it’s certainly obvious to anyone who understands anything about humanity that women are not inferior to men. In fact, the very fact that many debate that point, somewhat angrily, insisting upon their equality, is the only thing that suggests to us that they’re not equal. It’s the only argument that someone might say, “Well, maybe there’s

some feeling deep down within that they’re not equal.” Everybody, it seems to me, with any kind of objectivity realizes that women are not inferior to men.

When the Apostle says wives submit to your husbands as unto the Lord, it’s obvious that he could not have in mind inferiority. But this is one of the major points made today by evangelical feminists. Now, of course, feminists do not have direct connection with spiritual truth, so many of the things that they are saying cannot be related to the word of God at all. But there is a segment of evangelicalism – those who at least say that they believe the word of God – who say that submission of itself means inferiority, that one cannot really be in submission and not be inferior. In other words, in the very term submission, inferiority is involved.

Now we will turn in a few moments to a text upon which that sentiment is sometimes based, but it’s plain, it seems to me, that the Apostle, in all of his teaching, gathering it together, does not have that in mind. He says the woman’s responsibility is to submit. Now I’d like for you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, and perhaps this will help us to see that the Apostle does not think of submission as implying inferiority.

Now, of course, we’re going to assume that you are evangelical Christians, that is, that you believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, that there is one God who subsists in three persons who are themselves equal in power, in authority, in the possession of the divine attributes, and in the other things that make for the possession of deity. Now listen to the Apostle’s words in 1 Corinthians 11, beginning at verse 2:

“Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you. 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. Every man, praying or prophesying, having his head covered dishonors his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head, for that is even all one as if she were shaved. If the woman be not covered let her also be shorn, but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.”

Well, you see the general context of what the Apostle is saying and the important text is the text in verse 3:

“I would have you to know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head

of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”

Now the statement is clearly made that Christ has a head, and his head is God. And the statement is made that we have a head, and our head is Christ, and the woman has a head, and her head is the man.

Now, let me ask you a question, as an evangelical Christian: if God is the head of Christ, are we to assume, then, that Jesus Christ is inferior to God? No, no. We know the Scriptures teach us that the Lord Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity, and he is equal with the Father in all of the things that make up deity. And yet at the same time the Father is the head of Christ. What is meant?

What is simply meant is that the Lord Jesus Christ, during his mediatorial ministry, which does not end until the kingdom is over, he acts out of his relationship as a mediatorial son. The time will come that he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all. In the meantime, he is submissive to the Father. He does the things the Father asks him to do. He says the things the Father tells him to say, he says in his earthly ministry.

Furthermore, he said he did not know the time of the Second Advent. Now being the second person of the Trinity, in his divine personality, he knew that. But out of his human nature as Son, in submission to the Father, receiving the messages from the Father, which have to do with the guidance of the Son, he did not know. So when we read here that God is the head of Christ, submission is involved, but not inferiority.

So when Paul says to the wife, “Wives submit to your own husbands as unto the Lord,” the Apostle means simply submission and not inferiority. It does not suggest in any way that the woman is inferior to the man, but she has a certain relationship for a specific purpose. That is her duty, as a member of a family before God, is to take that position, just as our Lord’s duty to carry out the Messianic work was that he submit to the direction of the Father and the guidance of the Father through the Spirit to carry out his ministry.

Well what about Galatians chapter 3 and verse 28? Does not the Apostle say, 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.” Does not that say that the woman has absolute equality with the man and therefore the idea of submission is not a biblical ideal but something derived from Jewish theology? Well, no, the Apostle does not say that, he says simply that in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek. But wait a minute, in other passages, Paul tells us there are such things as Jews and Greeks. So in

other places he tells us there are Jews and there are Greeks. There is neither bond nor free. In other places the Apostle gives specific instructions to slaves and to their masters. He says there is neither male nor female. The Apostle, in other places, points out the things that have to do with females and the things that have to do with males. And, he goes on to say, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. The Apostle is speaking of the relationship that we have in Christ, the spiritual relationship – the relationship of a spiritual position – not the relationship in the family, not the relationship in the state, not the relationship in the church.

Why, in the church, we are subject to elders. We are to submit to the elders. In the family, the children are to obey the parents. In the state, we are all to submit to the high authorities. So when the Apostle writes, “You’re all one in Christ Jesus,” he’s talking about spiritual privilege and position. But when he says, that the wives are to submit, or that the husbands are to submit to the elders, or that we’re all to submit to the state, he’s talking about a particular relationship that we have, and those relationships in which we all live.

Therefore, wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord – that is your calling, as a wife, to be submissive. Not inferior, but to be submissive. So, submission does not involve inferiority. The Apostle, I think makes that very plain when you consider all of his teaching.

Now he gives some reasons why this is true. His argumentation is, first of all, you should submit yourselves as unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. In other words, you should regard him in that light. For, he says, the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church. So that’s one of the reasons why the wives should submit. The husband is the head of the wife, just like Christ is the head of the church. And furthermore, Paul says, he’s the savior of the Body.

It’s rather interesting, is it not, that the church and also the woman were formed out of a husband. In the Old Testament, when Eve was created by God, she was created out of Adam. God took the rib of Adam, and out of the rib of Adam formed Eve, his wife. Paul, in other places, will use that as a reason for submission: she has secondary existence from Adam.

The church, similarly, has come into existence. For the church is the product of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as Adam was by God put in a deep sleep – divine anesthetic – and out of that picture of death Eve was created, so the Lord Jesus Christ, on Calvary’s cross, there died for sinners that out of his death there might be created the basis for the existence of the Christian church. So both the wife and the church have

been formed out of their husbands. The Scripture goes on to say the church has been made by God the wife of Jesus Christ – we’ll talk about that in a moment I think.

Now, so then the Apostle says, wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord, the husband is the head of the wife just like Christ is the head of the church. He’s the savior of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ let the wives be subject to their own husbands in everything. It’s not a very wise comment, but it should be noted that the wives are to be subject to their own husbands in everything.

Now the Scriptures, of course, say that the wife is to obey her husband. She’s to submit; other passages say “obey.” People gain the impression, from, taking texts out of their contexts, that that means the wife is to obey the husband in everything. But that is not what the Bible teaches. That is not an unconditional obedience. That is an obedience that is conditioned by the word of God. And when the husband is not obeying Scripture, it is not the responsibility of the wife to obey her husband. She is to obey the Lord. It’s important for us to remember that.

So when a person says, as a woman, for example, “I will obey my husband,” that is not an absolute, unconditional obedience. That’s an obedience that is conditioned by the word of God, just as our obedience to the state is conditioned by the word of God. But, there is nothing as far as I can tell that is difficult about a Christian woman who is seeking to follow the word of God saying, “I will obey my husband.” There is nothing that is more significant about that than the teaching of holy Scripture.

Now most of you know, if you’ve ever seen me perform a ceremony, that in the ceremony that I use, obey appears quite a few times. In fact, so often that very frequently after I finish a ceremony some men will come up and say, “I sure would like to be married by that ceremony.” They think of course, jokingly, that that means they have absolute authority of their wives. Well, no, that’s not what is meant, of course. Some of them even come up and say, “I’d like to be married again to my wife by that ceremony.” So they got the point.

Submission. But it’s submission within the word of God, the will of God. Now we’ll skip over what the Bible says about husbands and go to—[laughter]

Well, the Apostle says in verse 25 that characteristic of the husband is to be devotion: “Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it.” So the Apostle moves from the authority that the wife is to accord to her husband, to the affections that the husband is to show his wife. He should love his wife.

I gather that this love your wife is the kind of love that the Scriptures speak of

when they speak of a love that dedicates itself totally to its object. In other words, it’s the love of the will toward the person, and it’s the love of the will toward the person which may involve the supreme sacrifice, because we are to love our wives even as also Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.

John Chrisistum, who preached in the Fourth Century, and was called “golden mouth” (that’s really what his name means), has a comment on this, that’s, I think, very important. He says, “Hast thou seen the measure of obedience? Hear also the measure of love? Wouldst thou that thy wife would obey thee as the church doth Christ? Have care thyself for her as Christ doth the church? And if it should be needful that thou dost giveth thy life for her and be cut to pieces a thousand times or endure anything whatever, refuse it not. Yea, if thou hast suffered this thou has not done what Christ did, for thou doest this for one whom thou wert already united. But [Christ] for her who rejected him, and hated him. He brought her to his feet by his great care; not by threats, nor fear, nor any such thing. So thou conduct thyself toward thine wife.” So, the love of Christ for the church, a love that extended to crucifixion, for the church, the church that rebelled against him, and was an enemy, that was the love that Jesus Christ asks through the Apostle for our wives.

When we think of Jesus Christ’s love for the church, we think of different stages of it, and that’s what Paul does. He looks at his love in a threefold way. He looks at it as a past love, as a present love, and a future love, or a love with respect to the past, as love with respect to the present, a love with respect to the future. Listen to what he says: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church.”

Have you noticed the Bible says that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son”? The Bible also says, “Christ loved the church.” And then the Bible says, in Galatians chapter 2 and verse 20, concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, “who loved me and gave himself for me.” So the love of Christ is a love that extends to the world, it extends to the church, and it extends to me. Here, it is the love that extends to the church: “love your wives, even as Christ loved the church.”

Some people have the idea that Jesus Christ died in order that he might love the church. Well, no, that’s not really true. He did not die in order to love the church, but he died, because the Godhead, in the ages past, out of the councils of eternity, determined to elect in electing love the church, and redeem the church, and bring that church into fellowship with the Godhead. So he died not in order to love the church but because he did love the church. That’s his love in the past.

The Apostle also speaks of his love in the present. He says “that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” In the Old Testament, you may remember, that in the Tabernacle, when the Children of Israel had sinned, they were asked by Moses to bring certain sacrifices to the Tabernacle. They came to the door of the Tabernacle. The priest took the offering from them. The offerings were slain by the priests at the brazen altar – the brazen altar was the altar of sacrifice – the blood was sprinkled on the altar. And then, you may remember, that the priests, in their passing from the brazen altar in to the Tabernacle in order to carry out their ministry passed by the brazen laver. Now, the laver was where they washed their hands and their feet. And every time that they passed from the brazen altar and the Holy Place, they stopped, washed their hands and feet.

Now the sacrifice that they offered at the brazen altar was the sacrifice that pictured the death of Christ under the penalty of our sins. It’s the sacrifice that saves. But why did they stop, those priests, at the brazen laver and wash their hands and feet? Well, for the simple reason that the Scriptures teach us that even though we have been saved, we need constant cleansing, day by day. The very fact that we have a relationship with one another and with the world means that we’re associated with that which is evil. We are by temptation, tempted to depart from the will of God. We have many opportunities to displease him by our actions, not only from within but also from without, and then from above or about us through the Satanic desire to lead us astray as well. So it is necessary for us to be constantly cleansed after we have become believers.

Now Paul says, “He loved the church in order that he might sanctify it, cleansing it with the washing of water by the word.” That’s the way he sanctifies. He sanctifies with the washing of water by the word. Well, one of the reasons you’re here, even though you may not realize it, you are here in order that the word of God may have a cleansing effect upon you. It will cleanse you. That’s why it’s important for us to read and study the holy Scriptures; they are cleansing agents in God’s sanctifying ministry in our lives. So “that he might sanctify it, cleansing it with the washing of water by the word.”

It’s amazing what the word of God will do with people when they read and study it. And it’s amazing, too, what happens when individuals and families read and study the Scriptures, and they discover also that their children have a high regard for the word of God. O the power of example, and you parents who have children – sometimes you may wonder, “Why do my children not pay too much attention to things of the Lord?” Well, sometimes it’s because we haven’t really paid too much attention to them. Our children are able to read us fairly well.

I always think of an illustration that happened in the life of one of the children of G. Campbell Morgan. He was a great teacher and a great Bible student; he was a man who read and studied the Bible constantly. His children got the message.

One of the young men – in fact, I think four of five of his sons became preachers – Frank Carlsley Morgan, and others, all very well known preachers themselves. “Play with me Jack,” said 5-year-old Frank Morgan one day. But Jack had business of his own to attend to, and put his brother off with the reply, “I can’t. I’ve got to work on the Minor Prophets.” Now he was just a little kid, but he had heard his father say “I cannot do this” or “I cannot do that because I’ve got to work on the Minor Prophets, or I’ve got to work on the Gospel of John.” Dr. Morgan used to say he never even thought about outlining a Book until he had read it fifty times. Well, that made a great impression upon his children, and the result was that they were Christians and many of them preached the same Gospel that he himself preached.

So, the love of Christ has to do with our past. It has to do with our present in sanctification, and Paul goes on to say that that love of Christ for us which is the standard, and that which is to guide us in our relationship to our wives, is a love that has to do with our future. It’s provided for our future. Verse 27:

“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.”

That’s the future work of Christ for the church, and you’ll notice that the church is looked at here as a bride that is to be presented to the Lord Jesus Christ, that he might present it to himself as a glorious church.

Now, if you’ll turn over to other passages in the Bible – we don’t have time to look at all of these – if you’ll turn to look at passages such as Romans chapter 7 in verse 4, there the Apostle says that we have been put to death to the law, and we have been married to another, to one who has been raised from the dead, so that the church, as is suggested here by the illustration, is said to be married to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are the bride of Christ. The Body of Christ is the bride of Christ. So, we have been married to another.

Oriental marriage, as you know, was characterized by three things. First, betrothal. The parents arranged this, not the individuals, as a rule. I would arrange my marriage for my daughter. And the marriage was a legal marriage when the betrothal took place. For example, if a person died, having been betrothed, then the person was

regarded, say a woman, as a widow, even though they had never lived together. That was the beginning of the marriage, legally.

Then, at a certain time, sometime later, the bridegroom would come to the house of the bride, having prepared his own home for her, he would come with his friends, and she with hers, he would come and take his bride, and he would take his bride to his house and there they would have a marriage feast. That was the second stage: the marriage feast. And the friends and relatives would gather, and sometimes this feast would last for several days, sometimes a week.

And then they would begin to live together. Those three stages – they’re all seen in the relationship of the church to Jesus Christ. He has already bought us by his blood. We belong to him, and he is our husband, we are his wife. The time is coming when he will come for us, and then he will take us into his presence. We shall enjoy the marriage supper of the lamb, and we shall spend eternity with him.

So the Apostle, against the background of that, he says that “he might present unto himself his glorious church, not having a spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” He wants his church to have garments of holiness. Now Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:2, speaking of the Corinthians as the body of Christ, he said, “I have espoused you to one husband.” Now that’s important: “I have espoused you to one husband.” Now what he meant to stress by that was that we are related to one husband, not two. In other words, there is a relationship not only of holiness but also of faithfulness to that one. So when we submit ourselves to others we are actually guilty of spiritual adultery.

The Old Testament uses that figure with reference to the Children of Israel, too, committing spiritual adultery. To disobey the Lord in the word of God, to company with the world, to make the world your friend instead of the Lord Jesus, is to play the spiritual adulteress or adulterer. To commit sin is to play spiritual adultery. So we have been espoused with one husband, for he wishes to present us to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish – absolutely holy.

I like that expression, “not having spot or wrinkle.” In other words, not only are garments washed but ironed as well. I’m not suggesting you wives iron your husbands’ clothes, but that’s what this is: “not having spot or wrinkle, or any of such things.”

The holy relationship. That’s the kind of love that husband is to have for his wife, The kind of love that cares for her in the past, the present, the future. Husbands, love your wives like Christ loved the church, and his love was related to the past, to the present and to the future.

He goes on to explain,

“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies, for wives and husbands are joined together, one flesh. He that loveth his wife loveth himself, for no man ever yet hated his own flesh but nourisheth it and cherisheth it even as the Lord, the church.”

Isn’t that remarkable? The Lord cherishes the church, and he does it constantly. At the present time – that’s an amazing thought – to realize that Christ cherishes the church. That’s why it’s so important as a body of believers that we be very careful about what we say about fellow believers, the things that we do with reference to fellow believers.

The moment that we say unkind words, unfair words, critical words, in that very moment we are playing spiritual adultery. We’re not in harmony with the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s why the Bible, in the Old Testament, singled out Israel’s murmuring so much. It’s the same kind of thing. Jesus Christ cherishes the church, and our attitude should be similar.

Now, he says in verse 31:

“For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife and they shall become one flesh.”

In other words, he goes all the way back to the Old Testament, and he says, do you remember how Eve came into existence, and do you remember what was said in reference to her?: “For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and they too shall be one flesh.”

That was one of the most magnificent things in all of the Bible: the creation of Eve. Do you remember the context? Adam was naming the animals. And the animals passed before him – he looked – he was given understanding. He was probably the most intelligent man who ever lived, before his fall. And he named all of the animals. But no helper corresponding to him was ever found. And so God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and then we read in the word of God that “God took the rib, which he had taken from the man, and he made a woman, and he brought her unto the man.”

I always think of that when I stand here in a marriage. That’s why we say marriage is regulated by the word of God, but it’s instituted by God. It was he who brought Eve to Adam.

And Adam, he’s been looking at all these animals, and he hasn’t found anything corresponding to him. And you know, I wish you could get the force of this in the Hebrew text, but, he looks at Eve – and I know what you’re gonna say, well he said “wow!” (that’s really what he said) – this is what’s found in Scripture, and this little word, I’m gonna translate it (it’s not translated this way in the Authorized Version; it’s not translated this way in the New International Version; it’s not translated this way in the New American Standard Bible (as far as I can remember); it is rendered this way in the New English Bible, and this is the way I think it should be rendered), but it’s the little word, *pa’am* in the Hebrew, which means sometimes “now,” but “now” in the sense of “now at last.” And so he looks at Eve and says, “This, at last!” He recognizes this is something of himself that corresponds to him. “At last, bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!” It’s a magnificent thing.

Think about that for a moment. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother. Now if he’s to leave his father and mother, what does that mean about marriage? Well that means that marriage is an exclusive relationship between two people. It’s true, some people don’t leave. But that’s the first step: “for this cause a man shall leave his father and mother” – and his mother, too. Notice, men; leave your momma. Furthermore, he says, and cleave unto your wife. It’s a permanent relationship, an intimate, permanent relationship.

It’s a God-ordained relationship. It’s a relationship of oneness; “they shall be one flesh.” And, it’s a relationship that according to this particular passage, is the greatest relationship that can exist between two people. The Apostle says,

“This is a great mystery that I speak concerning Christ and the church.
Nevertheless, let everyone of you in particular so love his wife as himself.
And the wife, see that she reverence her husband.”

Well, this is Paul’s picture of married life: one spirit in two bodies. And Paul’s pattern of married life is the relationship of the church to Christ. The husband has dominion, but it’s the dominion that arises out of the devotion of the deepest form of love. And the wife is to reverence her husband. Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for these magnificent words of instruction, for us. We thank Thee for the gift of marriage. We thank Thee for the relationship that husbands bear to wives in Christ. And we pray, O God, that the lives of the Christian

believers represented in this room may beautifully fulfill these exhortations the Apostle has given to us.

O God, may our wives in Believer’s Chapel be in submission to their husbands as unto the Lord, and may our husbands so love their wives that we are reminded of Christ’s love for the church.

We pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.