

“Submission”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. The text for our meditation this morning is the epistle reading, Ephesians 5:22-33, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” Amen. So stands God’s Word. Amen.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is not a popular text. When this text is read you some of the women in the congregation open their eyes a bit wider. They begin to pay even sharper attention as they wait for what the pastor will say about it. The men in the congregation may also sit up and take notice. Just maybe they can take something out of all of this when it comes to their marital relationship. I certainly agree. Both the husband and the wife can take much from God’s Word. What we do take out of this passage

should what many take from a quick surface reading. Many totally misunderstand what is being said here. Toward the end of this epistle reading in verse 32 Paul gives the reason for what he is being inspired to write, “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church.” Christ’s Church is the assembly, the body of believers who through the power of the Means of Grace have been brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ and His suffering, death and resurrection made to pay the price for their sins. Our text this morning is just one of the places in Scripture where the Church is called, “The Bride of Christ”.

The point of all of this is not in and of itself the relationship between a husband and wife. The point of all of this, as is the point and reason for all of Scripture is Jesus Christ and Him crucified and risen again for us, for sinners. Scripture does indeed tell us how we may, in response to all that God has done for us, live in a way that is pleasing to Him. As Christians who have been brought into a right relationship with God for Jesus’ sake we please God as we live according to His will for us His creatures. One way in which we do this is how we live with one another including as husband and wife.

When it comes to this relationship Scripture uses the word submission on more than one occasion. Our text this morning is an obvious example and we can not get around what it says no matter how hard we try to do so. “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.” But notice what it does not say. The text calls upon the wife to live in Christian submission to her “own husband.” It does not call upon the husband to make their wives submit or to be tyrannical over her. In fact exactly the opposite is true. “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the

church and gave himself up for her.” In the marriage relationship God has given the husband to be the head, but this relationship is for the good of the husband and the wife as each one look not to their own interests and desires first. The wife and the husband look first to the needs of their spouse in all things. In fact the verse immediately prior to our epistle reading speaks of this very thing as it calls us to “Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ.”

But there goes that word again. That terrible word, submit. We do not want to submit. We do not want to submit to anyone about anything. We do not want to submit to our Christian brothers and sisters in reverence to Christ. As husband and wife we do not always think first of the interests, needs and desires of our husband or our wife or our children. Children do not want to submit to the authority of their parents. Then of course we as sinful human beings resist and do not want to submit to the ultimate authority of God and His good and righteous laws for us. In fact the very idea that we will one day have to answer for what we have done, even to an ultimate authority such as God goes against the grain. We want to answer to no one but ourselves and we certainly do not want to think of it as submission to someone. That is because we think of submission with sinful lenses. We think of submission with a slant of one being dominant or tyrannical over another.

Well, again, surprise because that is not what Scripture is talking about. In fact the Bible does not look at submission as a bad or evil or even a humiliating act. Jesus placed Himself in submission. We see in Luke 2:51 after Jesus had stayed behind at the Temple that, “He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them.” Then of course we know that Jesus was submissive to His Father. Philippians

2:6-8, speaking of Jesus reads, “Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” It is of course at the Cross that Jesus made the ultimate act of submission to the Father so that the Father’s plan of salvation would be fulfilled. We see Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and He prays, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” So in submitting to the Father’s will Jesus did indeed drink the cup of the Father’s wrath over sin in full and He did it not for any sins that He had committed, because He was without sin, but for the sins of the world, our sins.

As our text tells us He gave Himself up for us His Church so that we might be presented to Him without any spot or blemish that we would be presented to Him as holy, as He Himself is holy. Now we see in 1 Corinthians 15:27-28, Paul speaking of Jesus writes, “For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all. We see that Christ is over all things and that includes His Church but He still is subject to the Father and He gladly and willingly submits to the will of the Father. We as Christ’s Church gladly and willingly submit to Christ our Savior and we do this not in fear but in joy because in giving Himself up for us He was looking out for what was best for us. We

submit to Him as our Savior and our Lord but also as our brother who through His own submission to the Father has brought us once again into God's family. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, forever keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.