

**5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;
5:2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.**

Ephesians 5:1 and 2 summarize and give the conclusion to the admonitions in the previous chapter. In response to what Paul has said in 4:25-32, the believer is to do two things: imitate God and walk in love.

The Bible often encourages being imitators of model behavior. Paul tells others to imitate him as he imitates Christ (I Cor. 4:16; 10:31-11:1; Phil. 3:17; I Thess. 1:6; II Thess. 3:7, 9). Sometimes churches are called upon to imitate other churches (I Thess. 2:14).

Ephesians 5:1 is the only place where Christians are explicitly commanded to imitate God, although elsewhere they are commanded to be holy as He is (Lev. 19:2), to be merciful as He is (Lk. 6:35-36, cf. Matt. 5:44-48), to love as He does, and be perfect like Him (Matt. 5:44-48).

Paul has already told us not to *walk* as the Gentiles walk (4:17) but to *walk* in a manner worthy of our calling (4:1). Now he tells us to *walk* in love. Christ is the model and reason for us to do so.

When Christ willfully "gave Himself up" for us as a sacrifice, His sacrifice was a fragrant aroma to God. Sacrifices that are termed as "fragrant aromas" are those that are particularly pleasing to God.

Paul's point is clear. Christ's love for others, demonstrated in His sacrificial death for them, was both pleasing to God and a model of the same love that every believer should have for each other. When we love as He loved, we also are a fragrant aroma, pleasing to God.

5:3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints;

Verse 3 begins a fresh series of warnings against behavior that is contrary to the Christian's new identity in Christ. Verses 3-14 can be broken into two main sections: the first (3-6) is a warning not to participate in sexual vices whether in

word or deed, the second (8-14) focuses on the imagery of light and darkness. Verse 7 connects the two.

"But" in verse 3 signals a contrast between the sacrificial love that is a pleasing aroma to God (5:2) and the self-centered nature of sexual sins. Love is a behavior that imitates God and is found in the light; immorality is a "deed of darkness" and "done in secret" (vv. 11, 12).

Immorality also comes first in a similar list in Colossians 3:5; it is that vice which believers are to "abstain from" in I Thessalonians 4:13, and are to shun according to I Corinthians 6:18. It is a work of the flesh in Galatians 5:19 and is incompatible to the standards held by those who enter the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9, cf. 5:9-11; Col. 3:5).

"Immorality" is a general term that refers to wrongful sexual intercourse but is used especially in relation to adultery and prostitution. "Impurity" is a broader term that signifies unrestrained sexual behavior and commonly appears in lists with sexual immorality (I Cor. 5:1; 6:12-20; 7:2; 10:8; II Cor. 12:21). In Ephesians 4:19 Paul mentioned impurity of "every kind" that includes every type of inappropriate sexual behavior. This is also listed in Galatians 5:19 as a work of the flesh and is not compatible with life in the Spirit (I Thess. 4:7, 8). The person controlled by these things is one who has made a commitment to his natural lusts over being controlled by the Spirit.

Greed or "covetousness" is the final sin listed in verse 3. Covetousness is the inward desire to want what one does not have. In the context, it is the inward motive that leads to illicit sexual gratification. The Ten Commandments tell us neither to commit adultery nor to covet our neighbor's wife (also see Matt. 5:27-28).

These sins are so serious, and should be so foreign to the Christian community that they "must not even be mentioned" among God's people. Some think that Paul is not intending this to be literal, but that he simply means that these sins should not occur. But verse 12 clearly says, "It is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret," which suggests that the writer actually meant that these sins should literally not be spoken of. Believers should not be thinking and talking about sexual issues or making them the topic of

interest, for this can lead to toleration and even immoral practice over time. This is not fitting for those who are called to be holy.

5:4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

In verse 4 Paul had mentioned that sexual "talk" should not be named among believers. He now specifies that it includes obscenity, foolish talk, and coarse joking.

"Filthiness" or "obscenity" is talk that is disgraceful and, in light of the previous warning about immorality, is probably referring to speech that is obscene. "Foolish talk and coarse jesting" could be degrading, disgusting, sexually oriented, suggestive comments, or dirty jokes. All three terms are verbal expressions that come from an immoral mind. To make sexual matters a form of amusement is to not take them seriously. Instead, talk should focus on things that are worthy of giving thanks (also see Eph. 4:29).

Thankfulness and filthy talk come from completely different mindsets. Immorality and vulgar speech are fundamentally self-centered, thankfulness is the opposite - it is the recognition of God's generosity. It is a response to God for all that He has given us, and the recognition that He is the source of every blessing. Instead of desiring more (being covetous), the Christian is overwhelmed by all that has been given to him.

5:5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Verse 5 and 6 have two severe warnings in them and are designed to motivate the believer to follow Paul's instruction about immorality. With absolute certainty, Paul declares that immoral people and those who are sexually covetous will be excluded from the kingdom of God (5:5) and that they will experience God's wrath (5:6).

No one needs to wonder about their relationship with God when they persistently participate in immorality, impurity, and coveting such things. The person who practices unrestrained sexual greed is an idolater. Along with the

greed for riches and power, sexual lust is an idolatrous obsession, for it places self-gratification or another person over God as the focus of one's existence (O'Brien, 363). Sexual sin elevates either the desire or the other person to a place of prominence in one's life and is antithetical to thanksgiving that recognizes God as the center.

Christians have been promised an inheritance (1:11, 14), have been included in God's household (2:19), and have been sealed until the Day of Redemption (4:30). However, those who have given themselves over to these sins prove that no matter how loudly they profess their faith, their faith is not real. Sinning does not exclude us from eternal life, but unrepentant, continual, shameless immoral practices prove that we have never really entered into a relationship with God (cf. Gal. 5:21).

Paul issues similar warning elsewhere. In I Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul says, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God." Paul assures the believers in Corinth that they have been like that "but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (v.11).

It is interesting to note that Paul usually refers to the believer's inheritance as a future event. Here, he speaks of it in the present tense. Although this could be a futuristic-present tense in Greek, the present tense indicates that wicked people do not possess an inheritance in the kingdom now or in the future.

5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Christians regularly absorb the world to fit into society. When they do this, society's behavior becomes acceptable in the church. The church conforms to the culture around it. This is particularly true of sexual immorality.

Paul adds a second warning to bolster the one given in verse 5. They should not be misled by anyone who encourages sexual permissiveness and suggests that such behavior is not that serious. Such words are "empty" - that is, they are

worthless, devoid of any truth (cf. Col. 2:4, 8) because they do not consider the holiness of God and His judgment against sin. The people who speak these empty words are not specifically identified; they may be people within the church (cf. II Pet. 2:12-14) or they may be unbelieving Gentiles outside the church (Ro. 1:32), but the following verses suggest the latter. The overall contrast in the whole chapter also supports this "insider/outsider" contrast.

The ultimate reason for taking these warnings seriously is because God's holy anger against such sins is coming upon the disobedient. As in 2:2, "sons of disobedience" is not a reference to those who sin on occasion but speak of men and women whose lives are characterized by disobedience. They do not submit to God's authority, but instead, choose to rule their own lives as they see fit. They experience God's wrath now as God gives them over to their lusts and will do so in the future when they face the final judgment. The wrath of God will fall upon the unsaved (2:2, 3; 5:7-8) and the reader must not be led astray by those who say there is no judgment for sin.

5:7 Therefore do not be partakers with them;

The consequences of a sinful lifestyle of immorality are so serious that the believer is urged not to participate at all with those who are disobedient.

Paul does not mean that the believer is to isolate himself from the unbelieving, for to do so he would have to remove himself from the world altogether (I Cor. 5:9-10; Jn. 17:15). Neither is he saying that believers should not relate to unbelievers (I Cor. 9:19-23). Rather, he is telling them not to be partakers with them. A partaker is one who shares in a relationship or a possession with someone else. Believers need to be careful that they do not share the mindset of the Gentiles and accept immorality as part of their lifestyle.

5:8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light

The reason that believers are not to be involved with disobedient and immoral conduct is not because they will face judgment, but because a mighty change has taken place in them. Paul does not say that they once were in darkness (i.e. that darkness was the environment in which they lived - though this was also true), rather, he identifies their nature as once being darkness ("You WERE

formerly darkness"). "Those governed by the dominion of darkness or light represent that dominion in their persons" (Lincoln, 327). Now they are light and so they are identified with the realm in which they exist.

Light and darkness carry several connotations in the Bible, but in Ephesians darkness represents ignorance, error, and evil (cf. 4:18) and here it includes immorality as a way of life and those who are separated from God by practicing it. "Light" and "darkness" are similar to the old and new man Paul had already spoken of.

It would be completely contradictory for the believer not to walk in light when he himself is light. One's behavior must conform to one's new identity. What this means is spelled out in the verses that follow.

5:9 (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

In a brief parenthesis, Paul explains what it means to be children of light. Children bear fruit that is appropriate to their nature - goodness, righteousness, and truth.

"Fruit" is a term that denotes the result, outcome or profit of an action (see O'Brien, *Philippians*, 80-81). "Here it signifies the ethical outcome of light, which is viewed as divine power" (O'Brien, 368). Goodness, righteousness, and truth are all characteristics of God and in this sense are like the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22.

5:10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

Verse 10 tells us how believers are to walk as children of light - they are to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

The word "learn" can mean to put to the test or examine, or it can mean to approve or accept something. In the former sense (which is most likely what Paul intends), it means that the believer is to examine the issues that arise in life to determine the best course of action, the course that would please God the most.

A number of other verses are similar in meaning. In Romans 12:2 Paul tells those in Rome to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." In Philippians 1:10, Paul prays that the believers' love may grow in knowledge and discernment so they may "approve the things that are excellent." That is, Paul wants them to choose those things that glorify God. In I Thessalonians 5:21, the readers are to "examine" everything and then hold fast to that which is good.

To the Jew, the law was the basis to determine what was good in God's sight (Ro. 2:18). Christians are to learn from Christ (Eph. 4:20-21). The truth that is in Christ and the gospel is the measure to determine what to do in specific situations to please God.

5:11 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;

Walking in a way that pleases God involves putting on discernment and taking off the unfruitful works of darkness. Although "deeds of darkness" is a general expression, in this context it primarily refers to the sexual immorality mentioned in the earlier verses. Because believers are children of light, it would be inconceivable for them to still walk in darkness.

Walking in light produces a harvest of goodness, righteousness, and truth while the fruits of darkness are unproductive; they are fruitless, sterile, useless (Matt. 13:22; Mk. 4:19; Tit. 3:14; II Pet. 1:8; Jude 12). Such works cannot please God for they bear the scars of the realm of darkness and are the product of those who are characterized by darkness.

Instead of participating in unfruitful works, the believer is to expose them. When the believer walks in light as he should, his deeds will contrast deeds of darkness exposing them for what they are.

5:12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.

The disgraceful things are the immoral acts of the unbelieving spoken of earlier in the passage. They have been referred to as deeds of darkness, unfruitful works, and now "things that are done in secret." The people that commit such acts

do not want them to be exposed for what they are (cf. Jn. 3:20) so they are done in secret. These acts are so disgraceful that Paul does not go into lurid detail. Instead of feeding the mind with the sinful acts of others, Paul wants the lives of Christians to shine in purity.

5:13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.

Verse 13 and 14 are difficult to understand, but one interpretation is as follows: The context is that of sexual deeds of darkness and deeds of the light. Darkness hides the reality of evil; the light exposes it. But light also has a positive effect upon darkness; it transforms it (cf. II Cor. 4:6). As the light exposes the nature of the things done in secret, people can have a new perspective on the nature of darkness. Some abandon it and become light themselves. Thus, the light has a twofold purpose (cf. Jn. 3:19-21): it both exposes and transforms darkness. "For this reason," verse 14 continues, "Awake and let Christ shine on you!"

5:14 For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."

Verse 15 is an exhortation to the unbeliever, but also pulls at the heart of the believer who is walking in darkness. Those addressed are called "sleepers" and "dead." "Sleep" can be used of the death of a believer (I Cor. 11:30) but is also used to describe a state of unawareness and forgetfulness. Drunkenness carries the same connotation (I Thess. 5:5-8; Ro. 13:11-14). The call to wake from the dead is a call to enter into the light by believing in the gospel. They are urged to leave the realm of darkness and let Christ shine upon them (Psa. 80:3, 7, 19; 50:2). Believers who have chosen to return to darkness would be drawn to leave it.

5:15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 5:16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

In the three preceding paragraphs, the word "walk" has appeared to describe the difference between the readers' lifestyle and that of the unsaved person (4:17-24; 4:25-5:2; 5:3-14). Now in verse 15 the word appears for the last time telling believers to be careful how they walk. A "careful walk" is amplified in a general way in 5:18-21 and then in relation to husbands and wives (5:22-33),

children (6:1-4) and slaves and masters (6:5-9). As a theme, 5:15-6:9 fit together well as a unit.

Believers have been reconciled to God and made into new creatures. This has ethical implications. As Paul has said, we are "to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called" (4:1). He also told us to walk in holiness (4:17) and to walk in love (5:2) and to walk as children of light (5:8). The final instance of Paul telling the believer how to walk involves being wise (5:15), understanding what the will of the Lord is (5:17) and being filled with the Spirit (5:18). Those who are filled with the Spirit are those who speak to each other in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and submit to each other (5:19-21).

"Therefore" (or "then" in some translations) links this new instruction loosely to the previous exhortation to walk as children of light and expose the works of darkness. Believers can only do these things if their walks are characterized by wisdom (Lincoln, 341).

The believer must walk carefully. "Carefully" signifies something done accurately, precisely, or after close attention has been given to it (O'Brien, 380).

How one should be careful is described by two contrasts - we are to be wise, not unwise. Paul has spoken of wisdom already in Ephesians and his use of the word gives us a clue as to how it is to be used. In 1:8-9 it says that God desires for us to know His plan of salvation for us so He lavished grace upon us *in wisdom* so that we might know the divine mystery. He also prayed that the believer have *a spirit of wisdom* to understand the mystery of God more fully and to live in it (1:17-19). Though the mystery had already been made known in Christ (1:9-10), the readers needed to grasp its importance. The third mention of wisdom was in reference to *the manifold wisdom of God*, that is, that diverse wisdom that God has in bringing two groups - the Jews and the Gentiles- into a united whole (3:10).

So mystery and wisdom go together. To be wise is to know the plan of God and to bring one's life into conformity with it. The wise grasp God's will and walk worthily of the Lord (cf. Col. 1:9-10). In contrast, the unwise despise or have no true understanding of God's gracious purposes.

Wisdom and folly are often contrasted in the OT (cf. Pro. 4:10-14; 9; 10:8; cf. Ps. 1, etc.). According to Proverbs, in order to walk wisely one needs to have

understanding of God's will. This involves not only head knowledge, but also skill in living. That is, to be wise is to understand in a way that works itself out in living. Those who know the covenant of God walk in a way that reflects that they are His people.

Those who are wise have the right attitude about time. The same expression is used in Daniel 2:8 where the Chaldeans, who could not interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, attempted to gain time before their death. Because the days are evil, believers should try to gain time in order to walk in a way that pleases God. They are to take advantage of every opportunity that comes their way.

The reason that they are to use every occasion is because the days are evil. Evil is widespread and has become a powerful force in the world (cf. Gal. 1:4) and will be growing, especially in the last days. The age is controlled by the Prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2) who holds men in bondage (2:1-3). Believers, however, have already participated in the power of the age to come and have become light (5:8) and are to finish their lives by living in a way that pleases God. This is expanded upon in the verses that follow.

5:17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Believers are not to be foolish but understand what God's will is. At first glance, this sounds like a repeat of verse 15 but there is a development of thought with a slightly different focus on the Lord's will.

The fool in Proverbs is the man who is careless (Pro. 1:26; 21:20), lacks understanding (Pro. 17:18), and despises wisdom (Pro. 1:22). He refuses to acknowledge his dependence upon God. The fool is the one who returns to his past destructive ways (Eph. 4:18).

In the first three chapters, God's will is described as a mystery that unveils God's saving plan (1:11). In the last three chapters, it is the believers' responsibility to work out God's will on a day-by-day basis. In 6:6 God's will is done when slaves wholeheartedly obey their masters.

There are some interesting features of Paul's exhortation that should not be overlooked. First, believers are told to *understand* what God's will is even though He had already made it known (1:9). That is, since they know what God's will is, they should do all that they can to apply it more fully. They need to lay hold of it and use it in day-to-day living.

Secondly, the believer is not to simply have the intellectual understanding of God's will, but that understanding he does have is to seep down to the heart and affect conduct. In Christian circles, the Lord's will is often understood in terms of personal guidance and understanding God's plan for one's future. But the will of God that Paul speaks of has a different focus, though it is personal none-the-less. The will of God is closely connected with God's plan of salvation and the formation of His people into the likeness of Christ.

5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

Verse 18 again amplifies what it means to be careful how we walk and how to live wisely. The believer is to be filled with the Spirit.

"Be filled" is modified by 5 participles that describe the result of being filled: "speaking to one another," "singing," "making music," "giving thanks," and "submitting to one another."

The first part of verse 18 is unexpected and seems very abrupt but it is a fitting contrast to the world's behavior and that of a Christian. Being filled with wine illustrates and contrasts what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

To be "filled" means to be controlled. A number of passages support this. John 16:6 speaks of sorrow filling the heart, Acts 13:52 of being filled with joy, Romans 1:29 of being filled with unrighteousness, evil, and greed, and II Corinthians 7:14 of being filled with comfort. In each case "filling" means that the person is controlled by a particular emotion. To be filled with the Spirit has a similar connotation. Just as people can be controlled by wine, Christians need to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, and just as wine results in particular actions, so does being filled with the Spirit (5:19).

5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

5:20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

5:21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Those who are filled with the Spirit express themselves with joy and gratitude as Paul had encouraged them to do in the doxology (1:3-14).

The five participles in verses 19-21 describe the results of being filled.

The first three have to do with singing.

- 1. speaking** in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.
- 2. singing**
- 3. making** melody in your heart

Speaking in psalms and spiritual songs is the same as singing and making melody in your heart. They describe the same thing from different perspectives. The first has a horizontal dimension of believers addressing one another. Colossians 3:16 tells believers, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Believers should instruct and teach each other through a variety of composed or spontaneous songs.

It is impossible to distinguish between hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs. "Spiritual" indicates that the origin of the song comes from the Spirit. A Psalm could refer to either the OT Psalms, or to a song of praise (I Cor. 14:26; Col. 3:16). A hymn was also a festive hymn of praise (Col. 3:16). A song was used of times when God's acts are praised (Rev. 5:9; 14:3; 15:3). Either Paul is listing synonyms or has different nuances in mind that cover the gamut of Spirit-prompted music.

"Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" refers to the inward disposition of our whole being; it is heart-felt and it is directed to the Lord.

The ideas of "singing to one another" and "singing in your heart" cover both the outward and inward praise that is to fill the believer's life. We are to have both a horizontal (believer to believer) and vertical (believer to God) focus in life.

However, Christians are also to give thanks (5:20). This is the fourth participle.

4. Giving thanks

Believers that are Spirit filled give thanks to God on a regular basis for the riches He has lavished upon them. "Giving thanks" is modified by four words that emphasize the role thanksgiving plays in the believer's life.

We are to give thanks *constantly* ("always" - NASB). Thankfulness to God for all that we have should permeate our whole being and flow out of our hearts and lips constantly.

Secondly, we should give thanks *for everything*. We should be thankful for the many blessings we have, but also for the trials that we experience. It's not that we should become emotionally hardened or stoic in our thinking, but that we should recognize God's sovereign hand in everything that transpires in our life.

Thirdly, we should direct our thanks *to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*. Our life is to be consciously lived under His authority and our thanks should be offered to Him.

5. Being subject to one another

Lastly, the believer who is Spirit filled submits to those whom God has arranged as their authority. To "be subject" is literally "to arrange under" and was used in military contexts of submitting to someone of higher rank. In the forty or so of the NT passages where the word appears, it has overtones of authority and subjection to it (O'Brien, 399).

However, the meaning in this context is debated. Is "one-another" considered reciprocal? How does this relate to 5:22 and following where submission among family members is laid out?

1) A fairly common view is that v.21 states a general principle of submission and the verses that follow offer examples of mutual submission.

This view is supported by the following:

a) The verb "submit" is in the middle voice indicating voluntary submission. It refers to responding to the needs of others. It would be submitting to each other due to the necessity of bearing with each other in love (Phil. 2:3) and maintaining the unity of the faith (Eph. 4:2-3).

b) The reciprocal pronoun "to each other" rules out the normal understanding of submitting to higher authorities. It speaks of "horizontal lines of interaction among equals" (O'Brien, 401). This would mean that all Christians are required to submit to each other - husbands to wives and wives to husbands.

2) A second view sees "submit to one-another" as a general heading, speaking of submitting to an authority. The verses that follow illustrate submission to appropriate authorities.

This view is supported by the following reasons:

a) The word "submit" regularly means to be aligned under someone of a higher position or rank. None of the places the verb is used is there a reversal in relationships. Husbands are never told to submit to their wives, nor are parents to submit to their children, nor the disciples to demons, nor governments to its citizens or masters to their servants. "Be subject" simply does not function as a word expressing mutual relationships.

Paul isn't telling Christians to be reciprocally submissive to each other, but to be submissive to those in the Christian community who have authority over them. Believers are also to submit to governing authorities (Ro. 13:1); wives are to submit to husbands (Eph. 5:22 ff), etc.

b) The pronoun "one another" is not always perfectly reciprocal. In Revelation 6:4 it says that men will slay one another. This cannot mean that the man who is killed kills the man who kills him. Nor does "bear one another's burdens" in Galatians 6:2 mean that believers are to exchange burdens with each other. In the present context, given that the verb "submit" is only used in hierarchal relationships, "one another" cannot mean mutual submission.

c) The flow of the argument that follows defines what is meant by submitting to one another. What Paul means by submitting to one another is that wives should submit to their husbands, children to their parents, and slaves to their masters.

Based on the stronger evidence and logic of the second view, this interpretation is favored over that of view 1.

The motivation to submit to each other is the fear of Christ. "Fear" doesn't mean terror or intimidation, but signifies a sense of reverence, awe and respect.

5:22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

Ephesians 5:22-6:9 addresses relationships in the household (cf. Col. 3:18-4:1); wives to husbands, husbands to wives, children and fathers, slaves and masters.

Wives are mentioned first and are commanded to be submissive to their husbands as to the Lord (the verbal idea is carried over from verse 21).

The following brief study gives a sense to what "submission" means.

The Greek word for "submit" is hupotasso (ὑποτάσσω). Tasso (τάσσω) means "to arrange" and hupo (ὑπο) means "under", thus the word means "to arrange under." Behind the idea of submission is that of order. It translates 13 different words in Hebrew that can mean "to acquiesce", "to submit," "to acknowledge someone's dominion or power," or "to humble oneself." Hupotasso (ὑποτάσσω) was used of hierarchical positions and stresses one's relationship to his/her superiors. Submission could be mandatory or voluntary.

Every time hupotasso (ὑποτάσσω) appears in the active voice, it is used in relation to Christ (I Cor. 15:25-28; Eph. 1:22; I Peter 3:22; Heb. 2:8).

The middle voice verb is used of having to submit to someone else - Lk. 10:17-20 (demons are to submit to the disciples); Ro. 8:7 (speaks of Jews who do not submit to the law); I Cor. 15:28 (Christ submits to the Father); Ja. 4:7, Heb. 12:9 (men submit to God); Lk. 2:51 (Christ submits to His parents - cf. v. 40 & 8:21); Col. 3:18, Eph. 5:22-24, I Pet. 3:1, Tit. 2:5 (wives to their husbands); Ro. 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13 (citizens submit to the government; I Pet. 2:18, Tit. 2:9

(servants submit to their masters); I Pet. 5:5a (younger people submit to their elders).

It is clear from the 40 NT passages where the word appears that submission has to do with subordination to someone of higher authority in an ordered system. God has established certain authorities and submission to them is due to the recognition of their divine origin.

The reason why the wife is to submit to her husband's authority is because "the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church" (v. 23). Christ has been called the head in Ephesians 1:22 where the term describes his rulership, or authority over the cosmos and the demonic world. In 4:15 His rule over people is spoken of (also see I Cor. 11:3-12 and I Tim. 2:11-13 for more on headship). Now a similar role is seen in husband / wife relationships. The husband is to be the leader or ruler of the home. Different cultures assign different roles to men and women but a biblical understanding of husband and wife roles is aligned with the analogy of Christ to the church. Christ exercises His headship over the church by loving it and dying for it (v. 25-27).

Paul is not commanding all women to submit to men, but wives to submit to their own husbands. The middle voice verb emphasizes that the submission is a voluntary act of the will, but the wife's submissiveness is considered to be an act of service to Christ Himself. Furthermore, subordination is not tyranny nor is it inferiority. Wives have different roles than husbands do, but they have been created in the image of God and possess equal dignity. The fact that the word "subordinate" is used of Christ's submission to the Father's authority shows that inferiority is not in view.

The words "He Himself being the Savior of the body" apply to Christ alone and are not intended to be analogous to the role of the husband in relation to his wife. The word "but" in verse 25 shows that what is true of Christ is not true of the husband. The husband is in no sense his wife's savior. The wife is to submit to her husband as the church submits to Christ, who is none other than the Savior.

In verse 25 the church's submission to Christ is the model of the wife's submission to her husband. The exhortation is strengthened with the words "in everything." In other words, just as the church submits to Christ in all things, so should the wife.

If we can answer the question as to how the church submits to Christ, we will see what is expected of wives' submission.

First, Ephesians 1:22 tells us that all things have been placed under Christ for the benefit of the church. The church is to imitate Christ's love and seek to please Him by living in holiness, goodness, and truth, and by understanding His will (5:17). The church is to joyfully submit to His benevolent rule and is to experience the blessings of His love and gifts for His people. It is in this way - by possessing these attitudes- that a wife is to submit to her husband. In essence, the wife is to submit to her husband in every area of life ("in everything").

When two people are married they become one flesh (Gen. 2:24) and they should function together as one. Neither should work autonomously. The subordination of the wife to the husband as her head creates greater efficiency in working together as one.

Some have wondered if "in everything" means blind submission. The answer must be that it does not or Paul would have to nullify all the exhortations to all believers in chapters 4-6. It should be obvious that a wife must not submit to her husband's wishes if his desires are sinful.

At the same time, the wife's submission is not conditional upon how much she feels her husband's love. He is responsible for his actions, she for hers.

5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

The husband's duty to his wife is now given. From the context, one would think that Paul would command husbands to rule their wives, but instead they are commanded to love them. The wife was to submit to her husband in every area of life; the husband is to show unceasing care for his wife's entire well-being. The command to love involves whole-hearted action (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 5:43; 19:19).

The model for the husband's love is Christ's love for the church. The fact that Christ "gave Himself up" for the church shows that His actions on behalf of the church were willing. He wasn't a victim when He died on the cross. A husband's concern for the well-being of his wife means that he should be willing to make the

greatest sacrifice for her - the giving of his own life. If he is willing to do this, how much more should he be willing to meet her lesser needs.

The picture of husband and wife was often used in the OT of YHWH's relationship to Israel. In the NT Jesus boldly uses the same imagery of Himself and replaces YHWH with Himself (Mk. 2:18-20; Jn. 3:29). If a husband behaves biblically toward his wife, the attributes of God will abound toward her. God does not rule His people as a tyrant, using His authority to promote His own self-centered motives but exercises love, forgiveness, selflessness, and grace.

The goal of the husband's love toward his wife is summed up in verses 26 and 27 as the love of Christ for the church is described.

5:26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

5:27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

Christ's goal for the church is described by three purpose clauses: (1) that He might sanctify her, (2) that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, (3) and that she might be holy and blameless. Ezekiel 16:1-14 describes similar aspirations of God in relationship to Israel.

The first reason that Christ gave Himself up for the church is so that He might sanctify her. To sanctify something is to make it holy for God's service. I Corinthians 1:2 calls believers "those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus." Although believers are also sanctified progressively as God reveals sin in their lives and they learn to walk in a manner that pleases Him, the sanctification here is a permanent act brought about by the death of Christ on the cross. It is the result of Him giving Himself up for the church (v. 25).

Closely related to sanctification is the cleansing of the church through the "washing of water through the word." The action of cleansing occurs when the individual is sanctified at salvation (contra the NASB translation "having cleansed" which indicates that the cleansing happened prior to sanctification - cf. O'Brien, 424). The cleansing is the removal of sin; sanctification is being set apart from it.

Washing of water with the word is a spiritual action (cf. I Cor. 6:11; not baptism as some see it). It is cleansing effected by the Word and is probably a reference to the gospel (cf. Eph. 6:17; Ro. 10:8, 17; Heb. 6:5; I Pet. 1:25). Christ gave Himself to the church and His death cleansed the people of God from their sins and set them apart for God's service. This came about through the proclamation of the Gospel. It is analogous to the bridal bath prior to marriage pictured in Ezekiel 16:8-14. Christ's death cleansed the believer from sin just as God cleansed Jerusalem in Ezekiel 16:9 before He entered into a marriage contract with her.

Christ's purpose in cleansing the church is so that He could present her to Himself in all her splendor (cf. Col. 1:22; II Cor. 11:2). Once again the imagery of Ezekiel 16:10-14 comes to mind. Paul doesn't say when this will happen but it will most likely occur at the second coming of Christ. "Without spot or wrinkle" describes the church in its perfected state with physical terms and is the same as being "holy and blameless." II Corinthians 11:2 also speaks of the pure virgin of Christ and is similar to Revelation 21:9-11.

Right now the church has many faults and sins that mar her beauty, however, someday she will be holy and blameless. The analogy to marriage is that husbands who have Christ as their example should also be concerned about the spiritual welfare of their wives.

5:28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies.

Paul repeats the command for husbands to love their wives but uses a new analogy as His reason. Leviticus 19:18 tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves, how much more then should husbands love their wives! Paul assumed that a person will look after his or her own best interests. Jesus urged the believer to treat others as they would want to be treated (Matt. 7:12).

Paul probably mentions "their own bodies" because already Genesis 2:24 which he quotes in verse 31 is on his mind. Because husband and wife are one flesh, when a husband loves his wife it is not just a matter of loving someone else as he loves himself - it is loving oneself. In the same way, Christ's love for the church is love for His own body (vv. 23, 30).

5:28(b) He who loves his own wife loves himself;

5:29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,

In verse 28 Paul told husbands that they need to love their wives as themselves. Verses 28(b) and 29 expand upon this thought. Although there are always exceptions, generally, people don't hate themselves but look out for what is best for them. To nourish and cherish something evokes the image of loving affection and tender concern. This is exactly what Christ does for the church (Eph. 4:11-16).

5:30 because we are members of His body.

The "body" concept of the church expresses solidarity and unity with Christ just as man and woman become one through marriage. What has been demanded of husbands has been experienced by them in their relationship to Christ as members of His body. Believers, both husbands and wives, experience Christ's nurture and care daily. This care should then become the model for the relationship of the husband to his wife.

5:31 FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE; AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.

5:32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

Verse 31 quotes *Genesis 2:24* and describes how woman was taken from man's side and explains the reason the two are one flesh. What is true of marriage is also true of one's relationship to Christ. Because the believer is married to Christ, he has become one with Him. We have become "one flesh."

Some see the mystery as the mystery of marriage, but it is better to see our union with Christ as the mystery. This is supported by the following observations:

(1) The use of the word "mystery" in Ephesians refers to something hidden in the past that has been revealed (Eph. 3:3-10).

(2) There is a shift in thought from husband / wife relationships to that of Christ and the church. The mystery of Christ and the church is typographical of marriage.

(3) The term "flesh" in Genesis 5:31 is synonymous with "body" in the earlier verses and is tied to the body of Christ.

The Christian marriage, therefore, is to reveal the relationship of Christ to the church. Role relationships are understood by the church's relationship to Christ, and then are lived out to model this to the world. This is part of what it means to bring all things into subjection to Christ (1:10).

See my notes on Matthew 5:27-30.

5:33 Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband.

"Nevertheless" concludes the discussion and emphasizes the main point. The profound theology of the relationship of Christ to the church has practical implication in marriage.

"Respect" is the same word used in 5:21 of "fearing" Christ (see notes on meaning there).