



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Ephesians 5:25-33

"Husbands"

Ephesians

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our passage this morning is Ephesians 5:25-33, which is on one hand very practical. I don't really like that expression a way of describing passages in the Scripture because it is a little misleading, but I think you know what I mean. This is a passage that is directed particularly to our duty as Christians and specifically the duties that we have within the Christian home and specifically Christian marriage. And yet it's all based upon theology, and so as I deal with this text in the lesson, the study, I will deal a great deal with theology because the exhortation, the instruction, is based upon that.

Well, I'm going to begin reading with verse 22 at a passage we looked at last week because this is the entire context, his instruction to wives and husbands in a Christian marriage. He writes in verse 22: Wives, be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord. 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. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also 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, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his

own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this cause, a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 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.

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we do thank you for the great privilege we have to come together as your people, to gather together this morning to sing hymns of praise to you and to your grace, your unconditional and unfailing love, and to be ministered to by music and also your Scriptures. We pray, Father, that as we consider the passage before us, we will not only see our duty as husbands and wives but as saints to you and to our head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that we, in examining these things, will see the greatness of His love for us, the effectiveness of His love for us, the sovereignty of His love for us, and we might be greatly encouraged by these great truths.

So instruct us well in your truth, build us up in the faith this morning, Father, we pray, through the ministry of the Word, and we look to you to do that because our strength, our life, it comes from you at every moment. We pray to be equipped for the week ahead, that we would be encouraged to be men and women of obedience, loyalty to you, and men and women who will carry forth the gospel of salvation, of a salvation that has been accomplished unfailingly and that we might declare that with boldness to a lost world. Declare to them the hope that is in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

Father, we are needy spiritually but also materially and physically, and so we pray for those who are in particular need, those who are in need of employment, we pray for them. Open doors of opportunity. For the sick, we pray that you would give healing.

Those who are recovering from surgery, give them a speedy recovery. We pray that you would bless us in the employment that you have given, that we would work diligently at it, that we would be men and women who apply ourselves to the tasks that you have assigned us and that we might do them faithfully and earnestly and bring honor to you.

We pray for our nation. We ask your blessings upon it.

Consider our government and those who serve us in that position and pray you'd bless them with wisdom. We pray that as they make difficult decisions that they would make the correct ones and that they would follow conviction and that you'd bless this land, bless it materially, bless it politically, but most importantly, Father, bless it spiritually. May your Spirit move across this land and quicken souls and bring them to a saving knowledge of your Son.

And we pray that if there be any in attendance this morning, anyone who does not know Christ as Savior, that you would bring him or her to a conviction of their lost estate and see that salvation that is in Christ and in Christ alone. We thank you for Him and we pray your blessing upon us now as we sing our hymn. May it be good preparation for our study together. Bless us again this evening as we return to celebrate our Lord's death, resurrection, and coming again at the Lord's supper this evening, and help us, Lord, to live in light of the fact that He is coming again. We look forward to that day, pray that it would be quick in coming and that we would be diligent in the meantime.

So bless us now, Father, as we sing. Bless us as we study together. May it all be done to thy glory and to our edification. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] Last week we began our study on the Christian home and specifically Christian marriage with the mention of family values and by noting that there is today in America a crisis in the family. One reason for this crisis is a failure of male leadership and in many cases a complete absence of male leadership, resulting in single-parent homes. The biblical design for marriage and for family is two parents

with the husband as the head of the wife. Paul makes that plain in Ephesians 5:23, which we studied last week, but it's a pattern that goes back before Paul.

It goes back to the creation in Genesis chapter 2, and so male leadership is not a product of culture nor is it rooted in the fall, as some feminists claim. It is the design of creation and when that pattern fails, when male leadership becomes weak or nonexistent, the family suffers and eventually society suffers, and we are seeing that very thing in all levels of society today among the poor and the affluent alike.

George Gilder has written a great deal on this subject and he wrote a piece not long ago in *The Wall Street Journal* on the importance of male leadership. He writes, "It is an important fact of life that in all societies and in all races monogamous marriage is based on patriarchal sex roles with men the dominant provider." Now, that's nothing more than the recognition of God's design in Genesis chapter 2, but he goes on to write: "Even Margaret Mead recognized that in all cultures, family values depend on religious supports and male providers. The effort to inculcate ethical behavior and sustain marriage without religious faith is the great fiasco of the modern age."

The tragedy for the church is that that fiasco is occurring in evangelical families as well. Many are failing. But this isn't simply a modern problem, a problem of the modern age. Divorce and abandonment, marital difficulties have been with us from the beginning. They were problems in Paul's day and that's clear from the instruction that he gives in 1 Corinthians chapter 7. He addresses these kinds of problems. Peter as well in 1 Peter chapter 3. Among the Jews of that day, easy divorce was not uncommon.

Those who followed the teachings of the popular Rabbi Hillel found grounds for divorce in the most trivial of things. If the wife spoiled the dinner or if she became less attractive to her husband, he could divorce her. And of course it was certainly a problem perhaps all the more among the Gentiles.

So Paul had to address the very things that plague us, and he does that in Ephesians chapter 5. He begins by reminding the wives that their responsibility is to be subject to their own husbands, and now in verses 25 through 33, he reminds the husbands of their responsibility. But you'll notice Paul doesn't say wives, be subject to your own husbands and husbands, subordinate your wives, force them to submit. Paul writes wives, be subject to your own husbands and husbands, love your wives. Christian leadership, Christian headship, is exercised in love, not in compulsion, and the Christian husband has been given the highest standard of love to follow, that of Christ for His church.

Verse 25: Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. The greatest act of love, the greatest standard of love, is the cross of Christ.

So to understand how we as husbands are to love, we must understand the cross, we must understand the atoning work of our Lord. It is our standard for love, and we can say two things about it. First, Christ's love is sacrificial and so husbands are to love their wives to the point of sacrifice, ultimate sacrifice, and second, Christ's love is particular. It is for the church, it is for His bride, and so a husband's marital love – his intimate love and affection – is to be only for his wife. Christ loved the church with a special love, far above that which He gives to others. That's why Christ died for the church.

If that were not so, if Christ did not love the church in a way different from the way that He loves the unbelieving world, the non-elect, if His love is not particular, if it is not for His bride, for the church, then by following Paul's analogy, a husband ought to love every woman just as he loves his wife and he ought to give his affection to others. But of course that's the very thing Paul is prohibiting. A husband is to love only his wife and Paul's support for that is the analogy that he draws between Christ's love for the church

and our love for our wives. It is to be special. His love is for His church, His elect ones, and ours is to be for our wives.

Christ died for His church. He redeemed His people. He purchased them in an act of love in the cross that is sometimes called particular redemption, sometimes known as limited atonement. Now, that expression limited atonement is in some ways a good expression, but it has the problem of implying things that it does not intend to imply, and so it is probably not the best expression. Definite atonement is a better one. Charles Spurgeon liked particular redemption, and he says of particular redemption that it is as plain in Scripture as the nose upon a man's face. I believe that, and yet the fact of the matter is many people today don't see it. So I want to consider this doctrinal issue for a moment.

We can't devote the kind of time to it that it deserves, but I want to give some attention to it because it's obviously important. Paul says Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, and that's the basis of his instruction to husbands, and so we need to understand what Christ did if we are to understand what the husband is to do. Now, it's always good to begin with a definition, and J. I. Packer gives a helpful one when he writes the doctrine, that is the doctrine of particular redemption, states that the death of Christ actually put away the sins of all God's elect and ensured that they would be brought to faith through regeneration and kept in faith for glory.

I want to read that again and I want to emphasize points that I think are particularly important. The doctrine states that the death of Christ actually put away the sins of all God's elect. Actually removed them. Sin was dealt with completely and finally at the cross. There, sin was removed for all God's elect and there at the cross was ensured our faith. That's where our faith was also purchased. So not only was our salvation purchased but the very faith to obtain that salvation.

Those are the two points that I want to stress in his definition. The doctrine states that the death of Christ actually put away the sins of all God's elect and ensured that they would be brought to faith through

regeneration and kept in faith for glory. Dr. Packer goes on to point out that there are only two other alternatives to particular redemption. In other words, if you profess faith in Christ, you can only hold one of three explanations for what Christ did on the cross. You can either hold to particular redemption or another alternative is actual universalism, which holds that Christ's death guaranteed salvation for every member of the human race, past, present, and future.

The other alternative is hypothetical universalism, sometimes called unlimited atonement, but that too is really a misnomer. It's not unlimited. It's not unlimited in its power, for one thing, but it's not unlimited in its scope, and that's really the idea of the term. It is for everyone universally and yet everyone universally is a limited number.

I don't know how many people will have been created when all is said and done. Let's say it's 10 billion, 20 billion. That's a limited number and is not infinite. Nevertheless, it's sometimes called unlimited atonement or hypothetical universalism, and it holds that Christ's death made salvation possible for everyone but not actual for anyone. It is actual only for those who add to it a response of faith and repentance that was not secured by Christ's death. In other words, Christ does part of the work of salvation with His death but man must do the rest with his faith.

Well, we know that the first alternative, universalism, can't be true. The Scriptures deny it. Not all are saved. The second view, that Christ died for everyone in order to make salvation possible, is very popular today but it has difficulties. First, it leads to the necessary conclusion that Christ failed in His mission. He intended to save all but He obviously didn't, and so His mission was in part a failure, and yet how did Christ conclude His ministry on the cross? With a declaration of failure or triumph? With triumph. He said victoriously, "It is finished." The work is completed; it did not fail in any aspect at all.

Second, this idea introduces confusion into the godhead. If we believe that the Father elects some - and Paul clearly teaches that in the

first chapter of this book – but the Son dies for all, then there's confusion in the godhead. Why would the Father elect some but the Son die for all? Well, third, the Bible does not teach that Christ died to make salvation possible; it teaches that His death actually saves. To my mind, that may be the most important point to bring out. Another way of saying that is Christ's death was effective. Christ's death saves. It accomplished its purpose, that of saving sinners. He purchased everyone for whom He died and secured for them, guaranteed for them, the faith to believe.

In other words, the cross saves. Now, let me give one example of that from Scripture. In Revelation 1:5, John writes: "To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood." It is the blood of Christ, it is the death of Christ, that releases and saves. He loves us presently, He loves us constantly, He released us in the past at the cross. That's where Christ accomplished salvation.

Faith merely lays hold of Christ and in laying hold of Christ, lays hold of what He gained for us on the cross. Faith doesn't save us; Christ saves us. His death saves us. His death secures salvation for us. Faith merely lays hold of it, and so because it is the cross that saves, Paul can say to the Galatians in Galatians 6:14, "May it never be that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord." Paul did not boast in his faith, though he had faith, he boasted in the cross because it is the cross that saves sinners.

Now, let's use some logic at this point. If Christ's death actually saves, if it determines the outcome and actually secures salvation for all for whom He died, and yet we know not everyone is saved, not all in the human race come to faith, then that leaves only one explanation for Christ's death. It was a definite redemption, it was a particular redemption, an effective atonement, the one that is limited in its scope to those whom the Father has chosen and given to the Son.

Now, you may say, "Well, that's logical, but that's not biblical," and yet it is biblical. Paul says right here that Christ loved the church

and gave Himself up for her, but there are other passages that state that as well. John 10:14-15, Christ says, "I am the good shepherd and I lay down my life for the sheep." Who are the sheep? The sheep are God's people. In Matthew 1:21, a verse that we often hear at this time of the year as Christmas is approaching, the angel announces the birth of our Lord to Joseph and he says, "You shall call His name Jesus for it is He who will save His people from their sins."

Christ's death is sufficient for an infinite number of people. Limited atonement suggests to people that it is limited in its power or it's limited in some other way such as that. No. It is sufficient - not limited in its sufficiency - it is sufficient for an infinite number of people and it is of infinite worth, infinite value, but it is efficient for a particular group. It is designed for our Lord's sheep, His people, the church, and that is not a small group of people. It is a vast number of people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, an innumerable multitude. You see this in Revelation 5:9 and 7:9, this vast multitude that has been saved out of a fallen world.

Now, we don't know who these people are until they come to faith. We don't know who the elect are. We don't know those for whom Christ died, and so we go out into the world with the gospel, with the good news that Christ has obtained salvation for all who believe, for whoever will call upon the name of the Lord, and for those who do, there is the certain promise that they will be received by God, forgiven of all their sins, and never cast out because Christ has obtained salvation for them, a salvation that they lay hold of, that they received through faith alone. His death made the fields white for harvest, and so we are to go out into those fields and reap with the gospel and know that all those who have been purchased by Him will certainly come. He will not lose one of His people.

Well, you might ask, "How can I know that I am one of the elect, that I am one of those for whom Christ died?" and I think the answer is very simple. We can find it in two ways. First of all, Christ died to save

sinner. Are you a sinner? Secondly, the elect believe. When Christ died for the elect, He purchased for them faith as well, so believe in Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you can know that Christ died for you. He died for all who believe in Him. That's particular redemption. Spurgeon said it's as plain in Scripture as the nose upon a man's face. Paul said Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, and that's the model for a husband's love. It is to be particular, it is to be special, a special love for his wife.

It is a faithful love. It is an unshared love. As the Proverb says, "Drink water from your own cistern and fresh water from your own well. Rejoice in the wife of your youth." Be faithful to her. Christ is faithful to His bride. From all eternity, His love was set on the church, even when He saw us wrecked and ruined in sin, yet in that condition, He set His love upon us and He has never wavered in that love and never will waver in that love. It is an eternal and unconditional love. And His particular love for the church was a sacrificial love. He gave Himself up for her, and that's what a husband's love is to be, an active love, a sacrificial love that has as its goal the benefit of his wife.

Paul illustrates this further in verse 26 where he gives the purpose for Christ's sacrifice. He gave Himself for the church to make her holy, that He might sanctify her, he says. The full statement in verse 26 is that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word. The tenses of those verbs indicate that the cleansing precedes sanctifying and so the cleansing refers to the pardon or release from sin and guilt, which occurs at the moment of faith when we trust in Christ and are justified, forgiven, legally absolved of all sin, and declared righteous in God's sight. But that raises the question: What does Paul mean here by cleansing by the washing of water with the Word?

Many understand this reference to water to be a reference to water baptism, not in the sense of baptismal regeneration because there are some very good men that hold this position, Charles Hodge, John Calvin, John Stott. What they mean by that is that the Christian

ordinance of baptism is designed to arouse faith, so that's how they understand the reference to baptism, but while that's a possible view, it's also possible to understand water not of baptism but as a reference to the cleansing ministry of the Holy Spirit.

I think we have an illustration of that from Ezekiel. The prophet Ezekiel in chapter 36 and verse 25 gives God's promise to the house of Israel, a future blessing, and in that God promises, "I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean." Now, He doesn't mean by that literally He's going to sprinkle water upon them. It's a figure and I think He elaborates the figure in verses 26 and 27 when He says, "I will give you a new heart and I will put my Spirit within you." So it's a promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift of spiritual cleansing that occurs with regeneration that will come at a later date when Israel is saved.

I think we should understand Paul's words along that imagery, that analogy. He's speaking of the cleansing, regenerating work of the Holy Spirit as it is accompanied by the Word, the giving of the gospel, and the reception of that and the resulting justification. When we believe, we are pardoned of our sin and guilt, and Christ begins the work of sanctification in our lives, the work of removing the pollution of sin from us and renewing our minds through the work of the Holy Spirit. We are presently being changed. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, that work is going on in you now. You are being purified.

And the ultimate goal of Christ's death and this present work of sanctification is our ultimate complete and future purity. That's what Paul says in verse 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 should be holy and blameless. The imagery is that of marriage in which the church is depicted as a bride for whom Christ, the bridegroom, gave His life.

Alfred Edersheim in his work *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* describes the formalities of an ancient wedding. There was first the period of betrothal when the bridegroom would hand the bride

a piece of money or a letter and by that, the engagement would begin. They would become engaged to be married. Now, the engagement, that period of engagement, might last quite a period of time, maybe 12 months, but during that period, they were considered legally to be married though it had not actually taken place. Then on the evening of the marriage, the bride was bathed and dressed in her wedding gown and led to the house of the bridegroom and presented to him. There was then a wedding feast after which the bride and the groom began their life together.

That seems to be the picture that Paul is drawing on here. As the bride of Christ, we are being prepared by Him. We are being cleansed, we are being dressed, so to speak. Through the teaching and study of the Word, the Holy Spirit is conforming us to the image of Christ. We are being purified by Him. And that purification is not complete in this life. It will never be completed as long as we live. It will be completed, though, as Paul says, when Christ will present the church to Himself in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle. We will be perfect, like a young bride, beautiful and without blemishes. It's a picture of moral and spiritual purity.

We will be holy and blameless, Paul says. We will be completely given over to the service of God. There will be no sin in us. That will occur, not in this life, as I say, but it will occur when our Lord returns for His church. We will be changed for all to see. We will be made glorious. John says it in 1 John 3:2: When He appears, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him just as He is. It will be an instant transformation and a complete transformation.

Well, that's the love of Christ. A past love, a love that goes back into eternity past, has no beginning and has no end because it's a present love and it's a future love, a love that doesn't crush but a love that sanctifies, and it has as its goal our complete perfection, and that is what the husband is to emulate. A love that seeks his wife's blessing and development. That takes sacrifice, and I suspect that most Christian husbands are prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice of

laying down their lives in an heroic act of death if that occasion should arise. It's the more mundane sacrifice of dying daily to self for the sake of the wife that is really the hard thing, and I must confess that I'm guilty on that count.

There are innumerable ways to do that, to die daily to self for the blessing of the wife, such as taking a break from busy schedules to spend time with her and get to know her. Just the other day I heard James Dobson on the radio talking about a man who gave up golf in order to spend time with his wife and instead of playing golf, he got his exercise by taking walks with her and spending time doing that. So men, that's something to consider. Give up those sunny days on the links, those nice afternoons with your friends, and have walks with your wife. Yeah, right, huh? Ladies, I think you shouldn't hold your breath for that one.

But we do need to make efforts to get to know our wives, spend time with them, and find ways in which we can give them relief from the responsibilities that they have, particularly those around the house. Do the dishes sometimes. Help clean the house. Take your wives out to dinner. There are numerous ways in which we can lighten the load and be a blessing to our wives.

The love that our Lord speaks of here is a sacrificial love. But sacrificial love is really sanctifying love because a husband's love for his wife should have as its object the purity and the maturity of his wife. It is to seek to promote progress in becoming like Christ, and so we should be men of prayer. A godly husband will be a man of daily prayer and he will daily pray for his wife and pray in specific ways for her spiritual life, for her duties and obligations, and for her friends and her relationships, for her physical condition – the list can go on. To do that, we have to know our wives and that takes time, it takes effort.

It takes sacrifice to be a leader. It takes a knowledge of Scripture to be a leader, and it takes obedience to it, and it takes the

skill to be able to impart the knowledge of Scripture to our wives and our children and to others, and that's what we're to be doing. We are to seek to know the Scriptures, live according to them, and impart that to others. Now, it is Christ who saves and it's Christ who sanctifies both the husband and the wife, but He uses us as His agents to do that in the lives of one another, and these are some of the ways in which we do that. Seek to be a blessing, make sacrifices for the wife.

But what about those situations that don't fit the model? What about a husband whose wife just isn't interested in spiritual things, who shows indifference toward his leadership? For example, ignores his budget, spends money too freely, refuses to accompany him to church. What is he to do? That's a tough situation, but I think that the answer has to be he is to do that which Paul instructs him to do here in Ephesians 5. You can't instruct someone who refuses to listen, that's true, but you can pray daily for them. Yelling and bickering accomplish very little – generally, those are acts of the flesh – but being a model can accomplish much.

Regardless of the situation, husbands are, in effect, to be Christ to their wives. They are to represent Him as a sacrificial husband. The same applies for the woman whose husband has abandoned her. She has the added burden of not only being a mother but being a father if she has children. But remember this: Christ is the ultimate head of the home and He never abandons us. He never leaves us nor forsakes us and He gives help to those who look to Him in time of need, and He will bless your efforts to raise your children correctly and to provide them with a godly environment.

In either situation, we are to look to Christ. He is the source of help, and His care for His church is the model of a husband's care for his wife. He is faithful, he is sacrificial, and sanctifying. That's what a husband is to reflect in his care for his wife, but he is also to show the same care to her that he shows for himself. Verse 28: Husbands are to love their own wives as their own bodies. We all naturally have

self-concern and naturally seek our own good, and that's proper, that's not selfish. It is only selfish when we seek our personal desires at the expense of another's good. As long as we are alive, as long as we are normal, we will have self-concern.

Paul is saying that Christian husbands are to extend that concern to their wives, and he develops that in verse 29 by pointing out that no man ever hated his own flesh. Our bodies are important to us. With the exception of fanatics and masochists, men take care of their bodies. Generally, normally, people nourish and cherish them. That's what husbands are to do for their wives, and again, Christ is the model. That's what He does for the church because, Paul says, we are members of His body.

That's a very prominent theme in this book of Ephesians, the theme of the church as the body of Christ, and it underscores that believers in Christ are in a vital union with Him, just like an arm and a leg are in vital union with the head, and so He cares for us, He nourishes and cherishes us, He provides for our material needs continually, He cares for us spiritually. He keeps us eternally safe. Now, that's one of the obvious implications of being members of His body. It has been said that when a man's head is above water, you cannot drown his feet. And our head, the Lord Jesus Christ, is enthroned in heaven.

He is above the troubled water of this world. In fact, He rules over it. He is seated above all powers and authorities. So while I may be afoot down here in the slop and trials of this life, I'm absolutely safe and secure in Christ because He is my head and my head, the Lord Jesus Christ, is absolutely secure and keeps me secure. Christ will lose none of His members. In fact, the very idea that He could is a very strange idea, that He could lose a member of His body. Christ can't have a body without a hand, without a foot, without an eye. No, Christ cannot lose one member of His body. He loves us and He keeps us safe.

He nourishes and cherishes us because we are members of His body. And because we are, He bears with us in our weaknesses. Paul said no one ever hated his own flesh, and since as believers in Jesus Christ we are members of His body, He cannot hate us. Just think of your own experience. At some time or another in your life, you felt pain. You may have had pain in your hand or you may have had a pain in your foot, but you didn't hate your hand because of the pain. You love your hand, you love your foot because it's a part of yourself. And so what do you do? You nourish the hand, you nourish the foot, you seek to restore it and care for it.

So Christ does the same with the weakest members of His body. He never hates us. He never hates us for our imperfections or our failures. Instead, He constantly provides for us and nourishes us, and that is the model for the husband's care of his wife. He treats her like his body. They are closely united. And to bring out that closeness, Paul quotes Genesis 2:24. Verse 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. Marriage is characterized by leaving and cleaving, setting up a new home where the husband is the head and where he and his wife become one flesh. They cleave together.

Literally, to cleave to means be glued to, and so it speaks of full commitment, a full commitment of a husband to his wife. He is to cleave to her. It is a close union, one of commitment, and Paul says of this union in verse 32 that it is a mystery. This mystery is great, he says, and by that, he doesn't mean that this union of marriage between a man and a woman is very mysterious. That's a romantic thought and it's a true one, but that's not Paul's meaning. In our studies of the book of Ephesians, we've come across this word "mystery" a number of times and we have learned from that study that a mystery is very simply a secret made known, a revelation.

It is truth that cannot be discovered by human reason; it must be revealed. It is known by revelation, and so this is a truth that Paul is revealing here that had not been revealed before. And the mystery of

marriage is Christ and the church. Marriage is a revelation of the relationship between Christ and his people. When God made Eve and gave her to Adam, he had as his primary purpose to give the world a picture of the relationship that Christ would have to His church. That means when Paul wanted to tell the Ephesians about marriage, he didn't search around for a good illustration and came up with Christ and the church to illustrate marriage – just the opposite is the case.

Paul came to understand that marriage is the illustration and an illustration that God had planned from all eternity to depict or to picture the relationship between Christ and His redeemed people. So marriage is a parable, a divine parable, and in light of that, married couples need to think very seriously about the roles that they play in that great parable because it is our privilege to show to our children and to show to the world the relationship of Christ and His church.

Now, Paul could say much more about this mystery of marriage than he does. Instead, he breaks off the discussion and returns to the main topic, the particular responsibilities of the husband and wife and concludes the chapter in verse 33, "Nevertheless, let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself, and let the wife must see to it that she respect her husband." So Paul concludes on the same note with which he began, wives being subject and respecting their husbands. That's their duty, even when it is difficult to do. But Paul's point is not respect your husband for his personal merits. That may be impossible. It is respect him for his role, it is designed by God.

He has arranged this relationship in this way, and ultimately it is the Lord that the wife should be seeking to please by living a life of obedience, and He gives the strength to do that, and He blesses when we are obedient. And godly respect is a great encouragement for godly leadership and a happy marriage.

Late in his life, Winston Churchill attended a formal banquet in London. He was one of a number of dignitaries, and each was asked

the question: If you could not be who you are, who would you like to be? Everyone, of course, was very interested in what Churchill would say. He was seated next to his wife, Clemmie, and was the last one to respond. When he finally did, he rose and gave his answer. "If I could not be who I am, I would most like to be" – at that he paused and took his wife's hand and said, "Lady Churchill's second husband."

Well, that's a good story and a good line, and it's the attitude each of us should have, and husbands are most likely to have that attitude toward their wives when their wives respect them and submit to a husband's leadership and do so with godly submission. And a wife is most likely to respect her husband who loves her like Christ loves. That doesn't just happen. As new creatures in Christ, we have new natures, have new hearts. We have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. We have the ability to do that but it doesn't just happen, it takes care, it takes attention, but it's attention and care that will pay off with great rewards. God honors the faithful, loving husband and the submissive wife.

We have been given the great responsibility of demonstrating the great mystery of Christ and the church, the love and sacrifice that Christ has for the church, which is an eternal unchanging love for His people. It is a special love. It is for the church. It is a sacrificial love, it is unto death, it is a sanctifying love. It is for our purity, our benefit. So as we conclude, can you say that you are the object of that love? That you have experienced that love in coming to know Jesus Christ? Can you say that you are a part of this great mystery of which Paul speaks? Do you know Christ as your Savior? Can you say, "Yes, I know He died for me"?

Well, if you can't say that with any conviction, then realize this: Christ died to save sinners, and all who believe in Him are received by Him, they are forgiven, and never cast out. So recognize that you are a sinner in need of a Savior and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and then you can say in confidence and in truth, "Christ died for me." May God

help you to do that. May God help each of us to display very well, reflect very well the mystery that is Christ and the church in our marriages.

Let's stand now for the benediction.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we do thank you for the greatness of the truth that we see before us. We are reminded of infinite, eternal, unchanging love that is yours for us. Love that chose an undeserving people for Himself. People that were lost and ruined by the fall, and yet you loved us notwithstanding all. You chose us for yourself and your Son gladly came to purchase us. In fact, He suffered the indignity and the pain, the shame of the cross for the joy that was set before Him, which was to redeem a people for Himself. A people of great number, a people from every tribe and tongue and nation.

We thank you, Father, for the grace that has secured for us what we could not obtain for ourselves, a blessing of salvation and eternal life that we receive through faith alone. We thank you for your grace. We pray that if there be any in attendance this morning who do not know Christ, bring them to the conviction of their sin and to the knowledge of Christ as the Savior, that they might believe in Him. It's in His name we pray. Amen.