

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,<sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,<sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Last week we learned how Christ loved His church.

Let me begin today with a quote from one of the early church fathers:

"Thou hast seen the measure of obedience; now hear also the measure of love. Do you wish your wife to obey you, as the Church is to obey Christ? Then have a solicitude (concern) for her as Christ had for the Church and "if it be necessary to give thy life for her, or to be cut in ten thousand pieces, or to endure any other suffering whatever, do not refuse it; and if you suffer thus, not even so do you do what Christ has done; for you indeed do so being already united to her, but He did so for one that treated Him with aversion and hatred. As, therefore, He brought to His feet one that so treated Him, and that even wantonly spurned Him, by much tenderness of regard, not by threats, insults, and terror: so also do you act towards your wife, and though you see her disdainful and wantonly wayward, you will be able to bring her to your feet by much thoughtfulness for her, by love, by kindness. For no bond is more sovereign in binding than such bonds, especially in the case of husband and wife. For one may constrain a servant by fear, though not even he is so to be bound to you; for he may readily run away. But the companion of your life, the mother of your children, the basis of all your joy, you ought to bind to you, not by fear and threats, but by love and attachment"

CHRYSOSTOM

In our Scripture verses we see three very specific things Christ does for His church because of His love, which presents a pattern as to how the husband should love his wife.

First, giving of self. Second, sanctifying her for God's glory and lastly presenting her holy and blameless before the Lord.

We know that the giving of Christ for His church was His death on the cross at Calvary.

This was done very specifically, very intentionally and with a direct purpose, the redemption of His bride from her sins. In that sense it was done with a partiality and selfishness and all the while it was a self sacrificial and self-less act.

While God is impartial in salvation in the sense that He saves all kinds of people, "there is no partiality with God", He is partial in who is saved out of all kinds of people and they are His elect, His beloved, those whom He foreknew and had already directed a very unique and specific, salvific love towards before they were formed in the womb.

Job made a covenant with his eyes to look upon no other the way He looks upon his beloved. The marriage relationship is the ultimate representation of the relationship between Christ and His church. Christ has a covenant with those who are His and the eye of His affection for His bride it is not for others. Job's eye would not stray in affection to another nor can Christ's covenant affection stray to another but His own.

Therefore, our eyes need to be for our wives only, those whom we love uniquely and specifically.

As husbands, we cannot sacrifice our lives for the sins of our wives to be forgiven. However, if necessary, we are to give our lives to protect and secure our beloved ones. In the protection of our wives there is no room

for pacifism. We are to be militant and combatant if the situation calls for it. As the shepherd of our homes we are to lay down our lives if necessary.

But there are other ways that we can demonstrate the self-less and self-sacrificial love that Christ showed His church.

It begins by knowing our wives, as Christ knew and loved his bride.

Christ knew everything His bride needed and presented those things to her whether she knew she needed them or not.

Now, I am not presuming that husbands are omniscient, but what I am proposing is this – do you know your wife?

If I asked you to name the five things that are most important to your wife not including you, your children, parents, income, the house or your occupation – what would you say? How would your wife respond to your answers?

Should I announce the disclaimer, “Don’t try this at home unless you are a professional.”

Christ also has entered into our sufferings, He has suffered along with us, He has identified Himself with us and our passions and our pains through His compassion and lovingkindness.

Men, do you enter into the sufferings of your wife?

Husbands, do you know her well enough to suffer her pain when she is going through the trials of life? Are you sensitive to her genuine struggles? Are you, there to comfort and help her. Yes, there are the times when only God can help, but are you there when God has made it your responsibility to do so or have you conveniently said without making an effort to help, that “only God can help you right now my darling.”

I can say this with confidence, that there were times when I had miserably failed in this and I was ashamed before God that it was so. But I also thanked my Lord that He is more than able to help and comfort my wife and that when I have failed God and my wife, that He has not and would not fail because He loves His bride perfectly and I cannot.

Now let me ask you Husbands, do you know your wife well enough to give her something, in love, that she does not even know she needs, whether she receives it or not.

Are you self-less to the degree that you are looking out for her best interests above your own and yet at the same time not compromising your role as the head?

There are things that Christ chose to give up for us that did not in any way compromise His authority, role or position.

Of course, we do not even attempt this outside of the realm of seeking the will of God in all things and that should cause us to consider the time we need alone in prayer, apart from our wives, just as Jesus was alone and prayed for His church and interceded on her behalf.

Do we have a model for prayer in the life of Jesus, praying for His church?

Of course we do and it is a wonderful parallel to Paul's teaching in the next part of the letter regarding the sanctifying and cleansing with the washing of the Word.

Jn.17:17 ¶ "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.  
18 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.  
19 "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.20 ¶ "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and

that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

What are we to understand from this parallel?

Jesus has prayed that His disciples, including us, would be consecrated, set apart in the sphere of the influence of His truth, His Word.

This means that we would live and move and have our being shaped and determined by the Word of God.

Husbands, through prayer and practice, we need to do this and then pray this for our wives and model it for them.

The act of Christ helps us, but by no means takes the place of personal consecration on the part of the believer. Our prayers will help our wives. Our praying will help us to help our wives.

We are sanctified by the truth, we are sanctified for the truth and we are to continue on sanctified in the truth.

In Jn. 17:23 Christ is making us perfect. This is the final goal. This the ultimate way in which God is glorified - when this perfection is seen in the world, the world will keep on knowing that Christ was sent from God and that is seeing the love of God through His church and I would say concerning our study it is true in Christian marriages as it is the ultimate picture of Christ and the church.

So, part of my responsibility is to help my wife to become perfect or complete and spotless for when she is presented before God.

Are you able to reason how this is first accomplished?

Yes, it begins with me and you, the husband.

If I am living as I should before God, there will be less opportunities for my wife to be tempted to resist my leadership, my decision making, and my authority in the home.

But how can I do more to help my wife be presented complete and spotless before God?

First, be a student of the Word. Be there for her when she needs an answer. If you do not have it, take the lead and study with her until you find it. If she is a better student than you are, you will not have to worry about it, you will not be asked for much, if anything.

Secondly, let her know that you want to be her counselor. Ask her questions, show you are concerned, become acquainted with the things that interest her and the things that annoy her, frustrate her and challenge her, especially concerning you.

Yes, listen to what she has to say about you. She should know you better than any other person if she is a godly wife. She will see you through the lens of the Scriptures and you need to listen to her. Will your pride be attacked, will your ungodly attitudes be revealed, will your sin be made known to you. YES, by the grace of God through a godly wife. So, if you are doing what you should be doing to present her holy and blameless before God, she should be growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ and more of His beauty should be evident in her and her words though they may wound, even deeply, will be the words of grace that are necessary for your own correction.

Also, do not allow her to be a gossip or a talebearer.

Thirdly, know her abilities spiritually and otherwise and encourage her and give her responsibility in those areas where she can manage wisely and effectively and efficiently. Help her to be trained in areas where she shows strength and ability but where it needs to be developed more.

You do not know everything. That is why you have a help-meet, a more than suitable helper. Wise overseers take advantage of the abilities of

others. It is a mark of good leadership. Do not be threatened by your wife's knowledge of anything. Make use of it and become a better leader in the home.

So, let us review some comparisons between Christ and husbands.

Christ came and voluntarily loved and gave himself for His church.

Husbands we are commanded to love and give ourselves for our wives.

Christ had a specifically directed priority after His love and obedience to the Father, and that was His church. Husbands your first priority after God is your wife.

Christ provided what was needed for His church. Husbands, we are to do the same. Christ served with an attitude of humility, as a servant leader, yet He was and is the head and did it all with authority as the head.

Husbands, do the same. Christ directed these things towards His called out church. Husbands you do so for your called out wife, for it was God who brought Eve to Adam.

My first point in biblical pre-marriage counseling is, who or what is bringing the wife to the husband?

And let us close with our focus on what Christ has done for His church.

In His great love He has sanctified his church, He has set apart his bride for Himself. Our Christ, the great Bridegroom came in the flesh and endured the cross and died so that we might have life. We are able to live the life He has provided for us because He has removed us from the sin that condemned us to an eternity of wrath and suffering. He has cleansed us by the washing of the Word, the Word that was empowered by the Holy Spirit to regenerate us, to make us new and clean in heart, so we could repent and believe in Christ.

The only way that His bride can be ultimately spotless and without blemish is because there is a fountain filled with blood that flows from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

Unto the glory of God, Christ will present His church just as He purposed her to be, not having spot or wrinkle. It cannot be accomplished completely in this earthly realm but it will be accomplished in glory because we are already spotless and blameless in Him as we are already partakers of all spiritual blessings in Christ completed for us as we are citizens of heaven and in Christ we are already seated in the heavenlies with Him and one day we will be physically there as well.

We are His glorious bride to the praise of His glory.

We are what we are and what we shall be because being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will, we must be presented before God spotless and blameless in Him.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.