

Ephesians 15-01-18a

This is Sunday, the 18th of January, 2015. It's my sister's birthday today. Happy birthday, sis, if and when you ever hear this.

We continue our study in the book of Ephesians. Paul's letter has reached the point now where he is making application. He's moved from the theological foundation to encouraging us to live in the light of those wonderful truths related to being in Christ.

And we will resume this morning looking at the exhortation that begins with submission one to another and moves through to Christ glorified in his church. Let's take a moment as we anticipate that study to go before the Lord in prayer and ensure that we have recognized and sought individually and as a group the ministry of God's Holy Spirit so that we can both understand and benefit from this portion of God's word. Shall we pray? Father, we're so grateful to live in this age.

It's as we survey the times of history, the dispensations, the various ways that your plan has unfolded. It's such a wonderful thing to live in this time of culmination, this time of magnification of the Lord Jesus where so many truths are so clear in ways that they never have been before. We do not have to wait in anticipation.

We enjoy the fullness of relationship with you through him and we're thankful for that. We're thankful for the potential that we have in the time that is allotted to us in this life to lay hold of righteousness by faith, to prepare ourselves for an eternal future in your presence with opportunities to serve and to learn and to expand our knowledge and our appreciation of you and of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that as we look at this portion of your word this morning that each one of us will find in it encouragement and motivation, perspective, objectivity to see ourselves as you see us with the assignments and the potentials that have been given to us all through the Lord Jesus Christ and we pray these things in his name, amen.

As you turn to Ephesians chapter 5 and the portion we pick up with this morning in verse 21, we recognize that the worthy walk as we have reviewed several times is defined as exhibiting love. It is manifest in love. We are not really capable as in our fallen flesh of an object of love.

Love as it is practiced in our culture is a very self-absorbed thing. We pursue things because of the feelings that they engender in us, the sense of well-being that we gain and even as we appreciate something or someone and say that we love it or them, there is a feedback loop there where we feel good, so good in fact that in medieval times if you read the poetry and listen to the songs, people that were in love were thought to be insane. It was considered a form of insanity.

When a guy would become infatuated with a girl, he would just lean up against a tree and stare at the sky and moon away the hours until he could be with his beloved. It was almost a disabling and paralyzing focus on a thing. Many of us have been through that.

While it is wonderful, we look for something that has more stability, more longevity, more substance, a more objective, realistic relationship where you never lose the appreciation but you find ways to express it that are less emotional and more meaningful that can actually make a difference. The great gift that God gives us as believers in the Lord Jesus, and it is something that the unbelieving world will never understand, is that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit and we can have a genuine transcendent love that depends much more on the lover than the object of that love. God gives us the character to love the unlovely because we recognize that he loved us when we were unlovely.

What is the upside for God in looking at a world full of sinful humanity and deciding to save us? As opposed to thinking a thought and the entire planet simply disappearing. It is hard for us to enter into the thoughts of God. His ways are higher than our ways.

His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. We have to think in terms of, well, he did it for his glory. He did it so that he can be appreciated.

But that is really human thinking. This is like saying, well, a guy did heroic things or has done charity so that he would be looked at and appreciated. And you would hope that your motives are higher and nobler than that.

Well, I just want all the poor people to love me. That is why I send checks to the Mission Rescue downtown. I just hope that all the orphans in Africa and Afghanistan will appreciate me and that is why I send money to feed the children.

It seems a little tacky. And it is tacky to say that, well, God does all of these things because he wants to be appreciated. We know better than that even on the human realm.

God does these things for his own purposes and they are way past our understanding. Think about your pet. If you have a dog and the dog sees you bustling around doing things in the house, does he understand why we bring groceries in from the car and put them in the cabinet? Does he understand why we move clothes from the hamper to the washing machine? Does he understand why we run the sweeper? Does he understand why I suddenly fire up loud tools that scare him and make him want to go elsewhere? He does not understand any of that.

And it would be a little silly for him to think, well, he is doing all of that to impress me. I have got much bigger fish to fry than impressing the dog. I love the dog.

I am glad that he appreciates me when I do things for him. But my world is so much bigger than what any dog can appreciate, at least we hope. So we want to be careful when we talk about the glory of God.

That is a subject in this portion of Ephesians chapter 5, the glory of God in Jesus Christ reflected in the church. And we just want to be careful. Do not think that, well, God is just sort of an

egomaniac and He just wants everybody to worship Him and that makes Him happy.

I just want a bunch of worshipful people. Do not underestimate God. Do not diminish God to a human level.

This is kind of like the admonition, the piece of advice, which is very good by the way. Do not argue with a fool because he will drag you down to his level and then beat you with experience. Do not drag God down to our level and assign... I was telling somebody else this.

Oh, I know. Somebody made a comment that all religion is based in need. Everybody that ascribes to any kind of religion, they are fulfilling some kind of need.

And I reminded this person that you cannot know the motives of another person. Sometimes even when they tell you their motives, it is not the truth. The only motives you can know for certain are either yourself or someone that you know very intimately, your spouse, perhaps your child.

You have a pretty good grasp of motive sometimes. But to go to the world and say, well, this is why people are doing this, this is why the President... You remember when they were talking about President Bush and the reason he was fighting the Iraq war is he was mad at them because they had tried to assassinate his father? Or he had a bunch of cronies that were in big oil and he wanted the Iraqi oil. Assigning motives to someone is a very dicey proposition.

And most of the time, and this is what I told this individual this past week, if you start assigning motives to people, you are either speculating or projecting. Well, if I were in his shoes, that's why I would be doing it. And many times these are sort of self-revelatory pronouncements.

You say more about yourself than you do the person you're talking about. So we want to respect the holiness of God. We want to respect the transcendence of God.

He is transcendent. Just think about how much your dog can possibly know and understand about what you are doing in any given day. Or a cat.

Not only do cats not know, cats don't care. Your dog often will care. He's interested.

Cats, you know cats. And the distance between us and the Lord God is much greater than the distance between our pets and us. So we want to keep that in mind.

Much of what is presented to us in scripture about God and his plans and purposes is a scaled down and very loose approach to help our understanding. And we cannot begin to enter into the higher ways and higher thoughts of God. And it is foolish to diminish God.

So as we talk about the glory of God and the purposes that the Lord Jesus Christ has in redeeming the church, which is his body here in this section, just remember the reason Paul is

using the husband and wife relationship and speaking about Christ and the church and that relationship is to help us with one small area of coincidence. It is one part of that comparison. You can't press the comparison.

You can't read more into it than what the apostle states about it. We have to be very careful and very cautious about making assumptions, about thinking that we've got it. This is section of scripture.

What is its purpose? What part of the book are we in? Are we in building the theological foundation or are we in the light of God's truth? This is how we should live. That's where we are. We're in the application phase and the purpose of this is primarily to give us a perspective for our obedience, to give us perspective for our view of the relationships that God has established.

What is my authority? What authority do I exercise and who is under it? How should I exercise that authority? How should I think of that authority? This is the point of coincidence and you'll see it. Matt, have we had a chance to put that link on? What page? Did you give it to him? Okay. Let me announce it just in case.

Is it on the home page? Oh, on the live stream. Okay. Alright.

Well if there's anybody who hasn't already gotten it, look on the live stream event details and the URL for the handout that I'm now going to direct your attention to is there. If you'll take a look at the handout, this is what we covered last time and I wanted to try to enhance the clarity a bit because I mentioned that there is a very beautiful symmetry here and you can express it in terms of a chiasm. Notice at the top I've labeled this, submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.

That's the transition he was talking about when you get together, songs, hymns, spiritual songs, singing, making melody in your hearts to the Lord and what is the environment in which those things take place? Where are we coming together and singing and making melody? It is the fellowship of believers. It's sort of a scheduled time of worship. And so in that light, we are expressing what the Holy Spirit does in us and for us and among us as a group, right? Be filled with the Spirit and these are the concomitants.

You can't just come together and crank up some songs and say you're doing this. This is an expression of the presence and the power of God's Holy Spirit which we access voluntarily. I think one of the hazards of the modern Christian model of worship that you see especially in larger churches where there is a worship team is just like in some other areas of Christian life including evangelism, we have the tendency to sort of elbow the Holy Spirit out of the way and say, I can do that.

And so we want to do the convicting to bring someone to the point of salvation or we want to in this case bring someone to the point of singing and making melody in their heart to the Lord. So the worship team is up there and they are just throwing themselves body and soul into trying to lift

a large somewhat inertial mass of people up from whatever they went through in the week. And so there's segues, there's spoken stuff, there's praise songs and the songs will move and build to a climax.

They carefully plan the stuff out. They put a ton of work into it and God bless them for what they are trying to do. But just recognize that what the Apostle Paul says is what fuels, what motivates, what creates the genuine psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Not the presence and power of the efforts of the worship team. In the same way that a pastor can present and prepare a very powerful expression of truth from the Word of God, but that's not what does it. Your spiritual life does not depend on the didactic excellence of the pastor.

It depends on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in your life. That's what separates us from the world. That's why going to a Wayne Dyer seminar or a Deepak Chopra seminar or one of these other guys, there's no Holy Spirit in that and people sit there and they are wrapped without a W. R-A-P-T.

Wrapped attention. They hang on His Word. They smile when He makes it funny.

They nod their heads when He says something that seems profound and it all sounds great. You walk out of there thinking I have got life nailed. I know exactly what I'm going to do.

I am going to reach the pinnacle of self-actualization. I'm going to listen to the spirit guides. I'm going to invest my money.

Who's that monetary gal that life is money? I can see her face. I can't think of her name. Another one of these seminars.

Anytime they start wanting money on PBS. It's like religion. I think if you are doing that, why can't you have Franklin Graham on? You've got these guys talking about spirit guides and listening to the Buddha and all the rest of it.

You can talk about any other thing you want. You can delve into as much as you want. That Wayne Dyer guy, watch out.

That guy is such a hodgepodge synthesis of religious. If you throw about four or five different religions into a blender and pour it into a glass, you've got H. Wayne Dyer. That's what that guy pitches.

It's almost pure Eastern mysticism wrapped in sort of an academic and the guy is really articulate and a wonderful presenter. He speaks. You can just listen to him.

He could be reading the phone book. He sounds great. But here's the thing.

People walk out of that. People buy those tapes and seminars, but it doesn't have life changing power. Hearing the ideas is like reading the surgeon general's warning about smoking.

Yeah, I know it causes cancer, but when I get the shakes and I'm nervous and I need to step outside and have a smoke, the little square box on the wrapper that says the surgeon general says this is hazardous has no compelling power for me. Hazardous? Oh, well, let me pitch that pack of cigarettes away and I'm just never going to smoke again. There's no power in the knowledge and all of these aphorisms and references and he throws Jesus in there just like the Muslims do.

Oh, yeah, you know, Jesus was a wonderful thinker, had a lot of great ideas as did several others. This is the distinction for you and me. This is what makes us unique.

This is what connects us not just uniquely, but actually to reality. This is the reality. This is the power.

You can have all kinds of machinery, but unless you've got a wall plug with active AC, it isn't going to go and you can build the most beautiful machine there is. But if it's got no power, there's no gas in the tank. If there's no electricity in the circuits, it is just going to sit there as a wonderful thing that would be great if it worked, but it's got no power.

That's why this whole section really begins. Be filled with the Spirit. Now it's not just singing songs.

Now it's not just making melody in your hearts to the Lord. It isn't just mechanically giving thanks. My default example of mechanical prayer is what the Catholics do.

Flipping through the rosary, Hail Mary full of grace. It's like the words have some kind of power in and of themselves. The priest, go to confession, well, it's been this many days since my last confession.

Since then I've had 12 bad thoughts and I've done three bad things. Well, you know, light three candles, say 12 Hail Marys and you're good to go. It's just mechanical.

It isn't how it happens. It is the active presence and power of the Spirit. We can do nothing in the flesh to please God.

You can do nothing in the flesh to please God. Nothing. This is why when the book of works is opened at the great white throne and men are judged according to their works, do you ever wonder about that? Why aren't they judged according to their faith? Isn't it just, you know, it's a binary value, one or a zero, either believe in Christ or not.

You either claim Him as your Savior or you didn't. Okay? Savior, no Savior. Savior, no Savior.

Savior, no Savior. Why is it just the book of the Savior? Book of the, I believed in Jesus Christ, Acts 16, why is it the Acts 16 31 book? Why is it judged according to their works? Why? Because that is what distinguishes unbelievers from believers. Your works never get there.

You can throw yourself on a grenade while you're throwing a thousand dollar bill at an orphan and it isn't impressing God at all. Doesn't impress God at all. All our righteousnesses, believer or unbeliever, are as filthy rags.

We are all as an unclean thing. The only thing that impresses God is our appreciation for Him and our actively pursuing and taking advantage of His grace. That impresses Him.

That's why we have this exhortation, be filled with the Spirit. Now when you are giving thanks for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. No unbeliever can do that.

No demon can do that. It is believers in the Lord Jesus Christ in this age in particular who have this privilege. So, that is the context and as you look now at this review of what we covered last time, submitting to one another in the fear of Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.

You've got the horizontal functioning in the sphere of authority. You're either the authority or you're under the authority. There's that submission and execution model for authority.

We're perpetrating authority or we're functioning under authority. In the sphere of Christ, that's the vertical. We are looking to Him.

You cannot do the vertical without the filling presence of the Spirit. You can't. He is the one that enables us to see Christ.

He is the one who connects us to Christ. He is the one who baptizes into Christ and who unites us. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father.

There is one Spirit. I think we did a little bit of that song on Friday night, We Are One in the Spirit, We Are One in the Lord. That is a very powerful truth.

It's a camp song, but there's a lot of truth in it. That is the context for this. If you look again at this structure, just very quickly, the example he says, Wives to your own husbands as to the Lord in verse 22.

You'll notice that I've labeled that A, because he's going to use this as the model. He's talking about two things at once. He is talking about our submission.

He starts with wives. It's a very powerful example. It's the most proximate example.

He's talking to a group that's got husbands and wives in it. It's a very quick and easy transition to go to that. Wives to your own husbands as to the Lord.

I would suggest, if you have your hard copy there in black and white, that you take the top line there in verse 21, right under the title that says Submitting to One Another and underline it. Underline Submitting to One Another and stop at One Another. Submitting to One Another.

Because this is his transition. This is his topic, right? The example begins with A, so underline Wives to your own husbands. Underline Wives to your own husbands.

Does it make sense? Wives to your own husbands. Now he then says, Because the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church. So now we've got this comparison.

And this is in the fear of Christ. This is the rationale. This is the reason to do it.

Why should wives submit to the authority that God has given their husbands? Because Christ is head of the church. So if you circle at the top, right under the title, In the Fear of Christ, then you can circle Christ also is head of the church in line B there. See the relationship? Submitting to One Another, Wives to your own husbands, In the Fear of Christ, that's Christ is head of the church.

You can actually even circle it up in line A if you want, As to the Lord. We submit In the Fear of Christ. These two ideas are interwoven all the way through this beautiful symmetry.

And you can see line C, He's the Savior of the body. And these things correspond. If you look at all the way to the center, working your way down, and I've covered this last time so I'm not going to review it in detail.

But you look at the center. What is at the center of the chiasm? I put a big X there to show the center of the chiasm. That He, and I should have capitalized the first He there.

I messed up. Because that's He Christ. That He Christ might present to Himself a glorious church.

Circle that. In the Fear of the Lord. Submitting In the Fear of Christ.

Because the whole goal of this, you're not submitting to your husband because he wants you to. You're not submitting to your husband because it's a teaching of the church. The purpose of what we do in this life is so that Christ can accomplish His purpose.

His purpose is to present to Himself a glorious church. So you can circle the big X point, the big center point of the symmetry there. That He Christ might present to Himself a glorious church.

If we are in harmony with that purpose, if we, even though we may not fully understand it, but we

say I want that to be accomplished, I want to be a part of that, we're going to do what we do in the Fear of Christ. We're going to recognize that Christ is the head of the church and we want to be responsive. We want to reflect His glory.

Now when you get down A, B, C, D, and you notice that the outside example is wives submitting to their husbands, when you get down to point E, verse 25, husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church. Husbands love your wives underline that. This is part of the submitting to one another.

And it doesn't say husbands exercise authority over your wives. It says husbands love your wives. And a part of love often is authority.

This authority is exercised in the sphere of love. This isn't authority out in the world and it's not love out in the world. This is within the body of Christ.

This is the authority that comes from God in families, in marriages, in churches. This is the idea and there should be love. The exercise of authority is in the sphere of love.

So he says husbands love your wives. That's part of that submitting to one another. And you'll notice in the E prime down there, verse 28, so husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife loves himself. But I would underline husbands ought to love their own wives. Husbands ought to.

This is have an obligation to, should. This is the design. Why? Because this is what the Lord does with the church.

And he makes that manifest down in the B prime point. This is a great mystery. It's almost a parenthetical line there.

When he quotes Genesis 224, we are members of his body and he makes the Old Testament, he puts the nail through that analogy with the Old Testament quote. In Genesis 224 he says, this is a great mystery but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Even when I tell you wives being submissive to your husbands and I say husbands love your wives, I'm really talking about Christ and the church.

What has he been talking about for the first four and a half chapters of this letter? Christ and the church, right? And he says look, the outworking of that truth of the church's relationship to Christ is this. It's an expression in miniature. And this is what unbelievers can't do.

This is what godless, faithless believers can't do. Is translate the vertical truth into horizontal application. We don't mechanically translate authority and we don't mechanically submit to it.

We don't just say, well he said it's on him, he says paint the wall chartreuse, alright. It's not an unthinking, it's not mechanical, it isn't superficial. The reason we can do this and do it well is that we are constantly in the fear of Christ.

We are looking at the relationship of Christ and the church, the ideal relationship. And we say, well my husband ain't no Jesus Christ. Well, that's on him.

But don't be dragged down to that level. If we are believers and we are under some kind of authority, maybe employment authority, maybe academic authority, maybe church authority, maybe any other kind of authority that is god ordained, governmental authority, we do what we do in the fear of Christ. We do it in his name and for his sake.

So B prime down there, I speak concerning Christ and the church, you can circle that. That is of a piece with these others. Now there's all kinds of links.

I've just picked out a few of these to kind of point out how symmetrical this is. And so then once again in B prime, just as up in B, where the husband is the head of the wife, just like Christ is the head of the church, down there in B prime, each husband should so love his wife as himself. The way Christ loves the church and gave himself for it.

And then down in A prime, let the wife see that she respects her husband. And you can underline that. Now, if you want to see this highlighted the way I did, I just used yellow for the underline and green for the circles on the copy that you can get off the web later.

But this is the idea and I hope that it achieves the goal that God the Holy Spirit had in influencing Paul to write it this way. It is about Christ. Submission and the whole authority issue, is not about, well this is the way we'll have a nice well-oiled machine in a marriage or in the church or anywhere else.

It is the means of understanding Christ and the church. Appreciating the Lord Jesus Christ and what he has done for us, his body, his church. You think about all of the insight we gain into our heavenly father and his care for his children as we experience being parents or being children of parents.

And in a healthy family, there is so much insight that we gain. We understand that children many times have to trust their parents when you're little. It's like I said earlier about the pets.

You don't know why your parents are doing what they're doing. They're bustling around doing stuff and it's beyond your, all of a sudden there's a lot of activity and a flurry and mom and dad look real concerned. I don't know what's going on.

It just makes me nervous that they're so, this is out of keeping. We're breaking the routine. They're packing us up, throwing us in the car.

We're leaving in the middle of the night. I don't understand what's going on. And we just can't fathom.

And so we operate in trust. Well, that's the idea here. Paul is trying to lift us out of the entrapment and the futility and the lack of ability that characterizes human life apart from God and apart from the empowering presence of God the Holy Spirit.

This is a Holy Spirit thing. It's not an issue between people. It is an appreciation of Christ and what he has done for us, his body, his church.

It is in the fear of Christ. It is so easy for people to come and say, okay, well now that we got the theology out of the way, here's what you got to do in your house. And that's not, we haven't turned that corner at all.

And Paul reminds us, he almost breaks the symmetry of the chiasm down there in B-prime when he says, this is a great mystery, but I'm speaking concerning Christ and the church. Don't lose focus, he says. You notice we got kind of an extra line there.

It's a verse by itself, 32. He says this is not simple. This is profound.

This is something that the Old Testament didn't teach. Why? It didn't have the universal filling of the Holy Spirit. It didn't have the activation of this opportunity for every believer.

When you're in Israel, the lessons and the examples and the enablements are corporate. It's the army of Israel that goes forth to battle. And the emphasis is on the corporate entity.

Here it's on the individual. So he says, look, this is new. This is complex, but don't lose focus.

I'm talking about Christ and the church just like I have been for the whole letter. So remember that the key to doing this successfully, the key to being a good husband and being a good wife and what is going to follow that we'll see in our second session this morning in all of the other spheres of authority is focusing on Jesus Christ, appreciating the Lord Jesus Christ. And you can't do that without the enablement of the Holy Spirit.

Most believers can't do it because the enablement of the Holy Spirit is not effective and active in their lives. We have to cultivate this. We have to seek it out.

It has to be our first goal. Be filled with the Spirit comes before husbands love your wives. Be filled with the Spirit comes before wives submitting to your own husbands.

Before children obey your parents. Before any of the rest of it, be filled with the Spirit because without that, there's no point in giving the rest. Be filled with the Spirit.

That's what this is about. That's what enables Christ to present to himself a glorious church. How does he cleanse it? How does he present it to himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing?

Holy and blameless.

How does he do it? Washing of water by the Word and that only takes place in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. So I hope this helps to clarify what we covered last week. Let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we'll move forward now into chapter 6.