

The Head of the Church



"The preservation of the church depends on the mere favor of God."
JOHN CALVIN

REFLECTION and **PREPARATION**

Do you believe in eternal security? How do you explain those who were in the church at one time, but now they are not? Frank Gabelein, the New Testament Bible commentator once said, "A test of Christian devotion is the extent to which, in happiness as well as in sorrow, we think of Jesus."

Let's think of Jesus rightly and believingly as we come to study this lesson.

LESSON AIM:

- To gain an understanding of the nature of Christ's headship (Lordship) in the church and to discover what it means for us individually and corporately.

DISCUSSION: Is the following statement true or false? (circle one)

- Union with Christ is a unique emphasis among the world's religions. T F

THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST

The headship of Christ is not only...

- God's order of *authority* over us.
- God's gift of *supremacy* to us.
- God's desire for *maturity* in us.

4. Christ's headship is God's picture of security for us.

Christ's headship is God's picture of a protective and practical love for us.

Ephesians 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.

The key to this entire section is found in verse 21...*"and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."* Paul will now teach about *submission* (subject) for three groups: 1) *for wives and husbands (vv.22-33)*, 2) *children and parents (6:1-4)*, and 3) *servants and masters (6:5-9)*.

Here is the key idea: *submission is not simply a response to the correct attitude of husbands, parents, and masters, but rather, it is to be considered a recognition of the mind of God.*

The headship of man over woman (*1 Cor.11:3*) has a *special significance* in the marriage relationship. Just as a man is to care for his wife as his cares for his own body (*Eph.5:28*), Paul lifts us to a higher, holier picture of Christ's care for the church.

There are several expressions of Christ's love and headship. See if you can identify them:

- **Ephesians 5:25-27**—Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷that 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.
- a. First expression: what He accomplished by complete sacrifice—*"Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her..."* Christ expressed not only *complete love*, but He also maintained *undiminished love*.
- b. Second expression: what He accomplished by a spoken word—*"...so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word."* This describes Christ's present and historical work in *individuals* until the church is complete (*John 13:10; 15:3*).
- c. Third expression: what will be the glorious result of His love—*"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."* This is both future and final. To *"present"* (*paristemi*) means to cause to stand

beside or near. In all her "*glory*" (*endoxos*) means honored, gorgeous, in unsullied array. Having "*no spot*" (*spilos*) means no stain of defilement. Having no "*wrinkle*" (*rhutis*) means no outward sign of age through the face. We will be "*holy*" (*hagios*), sacred, pure, unpolluted and "*blameless*", that is without shame or stain visibly attached.

Just one other though before we apply this:

This presentation will take place according to Revelation 19:7 at the Marriage of the Lamb. Christ shall present the church to Himself...

- Honored and gorgeous in *unsullied array*,
- *without one spot of defilement*,
- *Without wrinkle of age*,
- *sacred*,
- *pure*, and
- *without any stain or shame*—a beautiful bride

And all God's people said...AMEN!

At the Marriage Supper, *Christ* will present *the church* to His invited guests (*Rev.19:9*). During the millennial reign, He will present the church in its glory to the wondering eyes of the nations and kings of the earth (*Rev.21:23-26*).

What does all of this mean for us now?

Christ does NOW for His church, what husbands ought to do for their wives.

- ²⁸ So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; ²⁹ for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church ³⁰ because we are members of His body.

What does Christ do for YOU if you are a Christian?

1. He cares for you so as to avoid hurt or harm.
2. He loves you, and does not regard you has a possession, but as Himself.
3. He nourishes (by feeding) your soul with spiritual food and providing what you physically and emotionally need to live.
4. He cherishes you, which means (to impart warmth) so that you know your value in His eyes.

Why does Christ do ALL THIS for us? Because there is *a vital union* between Christ the head of the church and each member of the church—His body.

APPLICATION:

- What did you just learn that you did not know before?
- What thought pattern was just corrected in your mind?
- What emotions were stirred in your heart?
- How can this truth work in life? Give one personal example.



HART-TO-HEART

Jody Hart, *Editor and Director Mountaintop Resources*

The Beauty of Headship

When I was a new believer, I distinctly remember hearing a sermon from Ephesians 5 regarding the roles of husbands and wives. The clear line of that message that I remember went something like this: “Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the church. And Christ loves the church so much that He died for her.” I was blown away. Not only was male leadership shown to be something totally different than this warped view that I had, but it also points to something—some One—much greater. And who can measure up to that standard of greatness?

Let’s get real here. This whole view of headship (both when it comes to the home and the church) has been abused and misused, which causes so much confusion! There’s the extreme of men misapplying this truth and treating all women like property both within the church and without. On the other extreme are women who are completely unwilling to be led in any way. Then, there are so many variations within these two extremes—men of the church being intimidated by women serving in ministry, women taking offense to any acts of chivalry afforded to them (such as men opening doors for them), and we could go on.

Oh, but if we could just get a glimpse of what true, pure, and right headship looks like as we see the ultimate example in Jesus!! Jesus’ headship is one of deep love, of unimaginable sacrifice, and with the aim of our ultimate good. He owns us, yes. But, He is not some cruel task master! He is GOOD.

He’s our head. He’s our example. Shame on us if we contribute to this confusing view of headship. Let us strive to look like Jesus in how we lead, whether as a husband, parent, church leader, or other authority. Lord, help us.

ANSWER KEY:

DISCUSSION

- True

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