

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Ephesians 5:22-6:9

We should remind ourselves that there are just two divinely appointed social units. They are the Family, which is society in nature, and the Church, which is society in grace. Paul's practical exhortations deal first of all with life in the church, as we have seen, and there the duty which is emphasized is unity. The next exhortations relate to life in society, and there the supreme demand is for purity.

In this lesson Paul deals with the Christian home, and here the plea is for love. Since this epistle was written to Christians, the family herein referred to is a Christian one. Our home life is to be so ordered that through it men shall see Christ in relationship to His churches.

I. Exhortations To Wives And Husbands. 5:22-33.

1. Wives are to submit to their husbands. 5:22-24.

"Wives, to your own husbands submit yourselves, as to the Lord, for the husband is head of the wife, as also the Christ is the head of the church, and He is Saviour of the body. But even as the church is subjected to the Christ, so also wives to their own husbands in everything."

Marriage is an ordinance of God. Marriage is a type of the union between Christ and the church. The type furnishes us with the spiritual motives which should prompt us in the discharge of our marriage relationship.

Paul here begins his instruction by specifying the affectionate deference which married women should show to their husbands, expecting in return self-sacrificing devotion and love. The "subjection" of the wife to the husband is merely that voluntary submission of one Christian to another which regards the family as a divine institution wherein the husband has the responsibility of leadership, of support, of protection and of loving care. Obedience on the part of the wife and love on the part of the husband will not involve unpleasant complications or the exercise of tyrannical rule if both give Christ first place in their lives. The home is not a monarchy, but a democracy; not one mighty and the other lowly; not one all-powerful and the other subservient; not one giving orders and the other receiving them without question. When filled with the Spirit, both seek the good and comfort of the other in Christ.

- (1) The manner—"as to the Lord." 5:22b.
- (2) The reason—the headship of the husband. 5:23a.
- (3) The duty—"as the church is subject to Christ." 5:24.

2. Husbands are to love their wives. 5:25-30.

- (1) The manner—"as Christ loved the church." 5:25-27.

"Husbands, love your own wives, even as also the Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for it, that he might sanctify, having cleansed by the washing of water by word, that he might present it to himself the church glorious, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless." Just as it is the duty of a wife to obey her husband, so it is the duty of the husband to love his wife. This is a self-sacrificial love, a love that impels the one loving to give himself in self-sacrifice for the well-being of the one who is loved. He is to love his wife as being a very part of himself. There is more expected of the husband than of the wife.

How did the love of Christ manifest itself toward the church?

- a. In the past. 5:25b.
It cost Him His life, for He gave Himself for it.

b. In the present. 5:26.
It involves His unselfish attention, transforming it into a thing of purity, for He is sanctifying and cleansing it "with the washing of water by the word."

e. In the future. 5:27.
He will present it to Himself glorious and flawless.

(2) The reason--the wife is his body. 5:28a.

a. He is but loving himself. 5:28b-29a.
It is a love of nature as well as duty.

b. It is similar to Christ and the church. 5:29b-30.

"So ought husbands to love their own wives as their own bodies: he that loves his own wife loves himself. For no one at any time his own flesh hated but nourishes and cherishes it, even as also the Lord the church: for members we are of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

3. The implications of Christian marriage. 5:31-33.

(1) An intimate, indissoluble union. 5:31.

"Because of this a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be for one flesh." Marriage must supersede and supplant every other human relationship.

(2) It pictures the mystery of Christ and His church. 5:32.

"This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ and as to the church."

(3) There is the mutual obligation of love and reverence. 5:33.

"However also ye everyone, let each love his own wife so as himself; and the wife that she may reverence the husband." Love and reverence are necessary. In a certain section of the mountains, every train is drawn up the largest mountain by two locomotives. It requires the combined power of two engines to reach the summit. So the building of a true home is a matter of such tremendous importance, and the difficulties in the way are so many and so complicated, that it requires the combined forces of husband and wife to accomplish it.

II. Exhortations To Children And Parents. Ephesians 6:1-4.

1. Children are to obey their parents. 6:1-3.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is just. Honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, that well with thee it may be, and thou mayest be long-lived on the earth." The loving obedience of the child is to be encouraged by the sympathetic and considerate discipline of the parent. To honor someone is to treat that person with the deference, respect, reverence, kindness, courtesy and obedience which his station in life or his character demands. The child who has not learned to obey parents finds it difficult to learn the higher law of obedience to Christ. Parents have a moral duty to insist upon the obedience of their children. No child should disobey God in order to obey a parent. Christ is supreme and to Him we owe complete obedience. God offers rewards for obedience to Him.

2. Fathers have duties toward their children. 6:4.

"And fathers, do not provoke your children, but bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord." Provoke here means to rouse to wrath by treatment that is harsh and oppressive and unfair. Christian nurture is one of the supreme needs of our day. The tragedy is that so many children are allowed to grow up with no respect for authority, with no reverence for age and without any knowledge of Christian standards. The most important training ground for the education and discipline of children is the Christian home. Self-indulgence in childhood leads to intemperance in maturity and independence towards God.

III. Exhortations To Servants And Masters. 6:5-9.

1. Servants are to be obedient to their masters. 6:5-8.
Slavery was quite common in the first century. That accounts for this admonition, "Be constantly obedient to those who according to the flesh are your masters." According to verse seven the motive for service to a human master should be as to the Lord Jesus. In other words, the slave should serve the human master as if he were serving the Lord Jesus. The encouragement for doing this is found in the fact that whatever good the slave does for his human master, if done as to Christ, shall be rewarded. Our Lord keeps a careful account of all service rendered, and He is a faithful paymaster. Nothing done for Him will ever go unrewarded.

Obedience is to be rendered "in singleness of heart," not in hypocrisy and pretense, but with a sincere and undivided purpose, as though it were being rendered unto the Lord Himself. This obedience is not to be of the eye-service type. "Eyeservice" is a picturesque description of the conduct of servants who work well when being watched, but who are idle or careless when the master is absent. "Men-pleasers" defines those who for selfish purposes, even while unfaithful, seek to curry favor with their masters.

2. Masters are to be considerate with their servants. 6:9.
Threatening which implies coercion and compulsion should be displaced by sympathy and kindness.