

How to Submit to Your Husband
Ephesians 5:22-24
September 13, 2015
Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church

Well, we are taking a break from our study of Paul's letter to the Romans just for a few weeks here to look at the issue of marriage and family. Let me encourage you men if you weren't here last week. What I addressed last week is foundational to what I'll share this week, because the chief responsibility in marriage is ours, and that responsibility is to love our wives sacrificially, in a sanctifying way, in a way that promotes their spiritual advance with a nourishing love that cares for their physical needs, and to do so in a cherishing way, where we treat them with tenderness, the same kind of tenderness that a nursing mother treats her newborn. Those are all the lessons that we learned about our responsibility.

This week, however, we come back to the book of Ephesians, and we come to the wife's responsibility within the context of marriage. But before we look at the specific text that's before us this morning, I want to make sure you have the larger sweep of this great letter. In the first half, in the first three chapters of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he lays out for us God's great eternal plan of redemption. He shows us that plan cosmically and that plan individually and personally in chapter 2, as well as what that plan looks like in chapter 3 in the context of the church. So, this letter then, is about God's great, eternal plan, and what Paul calls in chapter 3 of Ephesians the plan of the ages. God is working out a plan of the ages.

Now, in the second half of this letter, beginning in chapter 4 and running through chapter 6, Paul shows us how understanding that plan of the ages should affect our daily lives. In fact, the hinge on which this book swings is chapter 4 and verse 1, notice that with me. Having laid out that eternal plan of the ages in the first 3 chapters, he says in chapter 4 verse 1, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk" [that is, to live day by day] "in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." With the word "therefore," Paul begins to apply all the wonderful truths of that great eternal plan of God's. And he says the call, for us who have come to enjoy and participate in that plan, is to walk worthy of our calling.

In other words, if you're a believer, if you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, God has called you to Himself. There was a day when you heard the gospel, perhaps as you had many times before,

but on that day, you really heard the gospel, and through the gospel the Father called you to Himself and you came. You believed in Christ. Paul says, if that's happened to you, if God has called you into a relationship with Himself, you must now live in a way that brings honor to the Father. You must now walk, you must live in a way that is worthy of that calling.

Now, the rest of the letter is really about how to do that, how to sort of live out the reality of the calling that we have enjoyed. One of the key sections of the second half of the book begins in Ephesians 5:15 and runs all the way through 6:9. Now, in this section, Paul tells us that to walk worthy of our calling we must walk in biblical wisdom. Notice verse 15 of chapter 5, "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise." He says if you're going to walk worthy of your calling, I want you to walk in biblical wisdom. How do we do that?

Well, he goes on to explain that the primary way to pursue a life of biblical wisdom is in verse 18, "... do not get drunk with wine," [don't be under the influence of some external force like alcohol or drugs] "for ..." [that's] "dissipation..." That's rebellion against God's plan and His way. Instead, he says, I want you to be under the influence of the Spirit, I want you to be filled with, or perhaps better, by the Spirit.

What does that mean? It doesn't mean that you're like a glass and you need some more of the Spirit poured into you, that's not what he's saying. He's saying, in the same way that alcohol brings a person under its influence, I want you to be brought under the influence of the Spirit. If you compare this text with Colossians 3:16, it becomes very clear what he means. He says, I want you to allow yourself to be filled by the Spirit with the Word. Let the Spirit fill you with the Word. Come under the influence of the Spirit, and that means coming under the influence or control of the Word of God.

Now, in the following verses we learn that there are three specific results of being under the influence of the Spirit, of being filled by the Spirit with the Word. The first result is in verse 19, there's a love for God-centered music. When a person is filled by the Spirit with the Word of God, they love God-centered music. I can tell you whether or not you are permeated with the Word of God on whether or not you love God-centered music, because this is a result. This is why we sing, this is why we sing out with our hearts to the Lord because you can't help it.

A second result of this influence of the Spirit in our lives comes in verse 20. It's a pattern of thankfulness, "... always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father...." Where there is the presence and control of the Spirit and the Word of God in

your life, there will be a pattern of gratitude, because you will understand that you have absolutely nothing you deserve, and everything good you have is something God has done in grace, and so you're thankful.

And the third result of being under the influence of the Spirit is in verse 21. It is a heart of submission to the authorities, the human authorities God has placed in your life. Look at verse 21, "and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." This word, "be subject," is always used in the New Testament of bringing oneself under someone else's authority, that's what it means. We must voluntarily submit ourselves to all God-ordained human authorities, and that is a natural thing when you are influenced by the Spirit and the Word of God.

And notice, we're to do so, verse 21 says, out of the "fear of Christ." You know, this is, sadly, contrary to the spirit of our age. Submission to human authority has fallen on very hard times in our culture. It is a huge problem in the contemporary culture at all levels. It's true when it comes to children to parents, wives to husbands, church members to elders, a pastor to his fellow elders, students to teachers, employees to employers, and citizens to police and governmental officials.

At every level in our culture there is a refusal to submit to those that God has sovereignly placed over us in positions of authority. But as believers it's so important that we understand that this principle of authority and submission is absolutely foundational to the moral universe in which we live.

In fact, it is a reflection of the nature of God Himself. Wayne Grudem writes, "The idea of headship and submission never began." Let me read that again, "The idea of headship and submission never began." It has always existed in the eternal nature of God Himself. And in this most basic of all authority relationships, authority is not based on gifts or abilities, it's just there. The relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one of leadership and authority on the one hand, and voluntarily, willing, joyful submission to that authority on the other hand.

We can learn from this that submission to a rightful authority is a noble virtue. It is a privilege. It is something good and desirable. It is the virtue that has been demonstrated by the eternal Son of God forever. He has forever submitted Himself to the Father. It is His glory, the glory of the Son as He relates to the Father. So, it is in the Person of God. It is a part of who God is for there to be authority and submission, authority and submission.

In addition to that, God has woven this into the very fabric of the moral universe that He created. He established, in this created order, a comprehensive system of authority and submission. It's not only true in His own person, it's true among the angels, and it's true among human beings as well. And Paul says here in chapter 5 that when a person is under the influence of the Spirit and the Word, he sees those over him in human authority as exercising an authority that has been given to them by God. And because he wants to submit to God, the believer submits to the authorities that God has placed in his life.

Now, Paul develops that idea, having mentioned it in verse 21 of chapter 5, beginning in 5:22 and running all the way through 6:9, Paul provides us with several examples of what it looks like to live as a Christian in the roles of authority and submission. Specifically, he addresses here three relationships of authority and submission. The first one is that of wives and husbands. You see this in 5:22, all the way down through verse 33, the end of the chapter.

The second relationship, 6:1-4, is that of children and parents. And then the third relationship is in 6:5-9, in that culture, slaves and masters, but perhaps an analogy in some ways, to the employer/employee relationship in our culture.

So, as Paul sets out to examine the principles of submission to authority, he begins with the Christian wife. Let's read this text together, Ephesians 5, and I'll pick up in 21 where he introduces this subject of submission to authority and read down through 24.

... and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. 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.

Now, wives have other responsibilities biblically beyond this one. In fact, keep your hand here, but turn over to Titus 2. In Titus 2, Paul outlines the wider scope of responsibilities that a Christian wife has when he says in verse 3 that the older women, notice the end of verse 3, are to teach the younger women "... what is good, so that they may" [verse 4] "encourage the young women" [here's the responsibilities of a wife] "to love their husbands, to love their children, *to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands," [there's the one from Ephesians] "so that the word of God will not be dishonored." [Those are the responsibilities of a Christian wife.]

Now go back to Ephesians 5, because here in Ephesians 5, Paul simply chooses one of those responsibilities, a key one because of the context. He's talking about submission to authority and how that's an expression of being under the influence of the Spirit. And so, this is the responsibility he deals with in this text. He, in this passage, tells every Christian wife this: you are not the God-appointed authority in your home, your husband is, and Christ demands that you acknowledge your husband's rightful position of authority and that you submit to it.

Now, I know that's incredibly contrary to the spirit of our age, incredibly contrary to where our culture is, but this is what our Lord has taught through the inspired writings of His apostle. This is what the church has always embraced and that has not changed, this is part of the created plan of God, and so I want to look at it together.

I want to look more in depth at this command, and I want to do so by asking a series of questions, and then letting Paul answer those questions as he does in these verses. So, let's look together. First of all, first question: What does it mean for wives to submit? You notice verse 22 says, "Wives, *be subject* ..." but you notice that those two words, "*be subject*," are in italics. That means they're supplied by the translators, they don't exist in the original text and that's because verse 22 borrows its verb from verse 21 in the original, where it does appear *be subject*.

Now, there are a couple of things we need to observe about this verb. First of all, it's in the present tense. In Greek that means this is an ongoing, constant responsibility, this never changes, this is a constant duty of the Christian wife. Also notice that it is in the imperatival sense, that's the sense of the verb, the way it occurs. In other words, it's a command, it's not optional, *be subject*. In the original language it's a participle, but the sense of the word, and all translations pick this up, is a command.

Now, I also want you to notice another observation we can make. Men, did you notice that this command is addressed to our wives? We are never to try to force our wives to submit, that's not our duty. Instead, Christ directly, ladies, Himself demands that you submit to your husband. But what exactly does it mean to submit? Well, before we look at what it means, as I often do, let me make sure you understand what it doesn't mean, because there're several really important things to understand that it does not mean.

First of all, it does not mean that a wife should tolerate physical abuse at the hands of her husband. Ladies, let me just say, unfortunately, in a fallen world, that happens. If that happens,

and men I put you on notice, call the police and have him arrested. Romans 13 says that government exists to punish evildoers. Police are ministers of God to curb human sinfulness.

This is the counsel we always give to wives: if you're being physically abused, call the police and have him arrested. If you think you may be in physical danger, leave. Old Testament law allowed a wife to take the life of her husband in the defense of her own life, and so arguing from the greater to the lesser, it's ok, it's acceptable for you to remove yourself from danger. Once you've taken those legal steps, or that physical safety step, also call the elders and allow us to speak into the life of your husband. But to submit to your husband does not mean to submit to physical abuse of any kind.

Secondly, it does not mean that you should allow your husband to encourage you to sin. Submission to him does not mean that you have to do whatever he says even if it's sin. In fact, Peter, in Acts 5:29, makes it very clear that our ultimate allegiance is to God, not to human authority, when he says, you remember, "We must obey God rather than men." If your husband's desires come in conflict with the Scripture, obey the Scripture, obey God. You are not responsible to submit to your husband if he commands you to do what God forbids, or if he forbids you from doing what God requires.

Thirdly, submission does not mean that you should refuse to graciously confront your husband if he is in a pattern of unrepentant sin. If your husband's a believer, he's in a pattern of unrepentant sin, Matthew 18 applies just as much to you as a Christian wife as it does to any other person. You need to kindly, graciously, respectfully go to your husband and confront that pattern of sin in his life, and if he refuses to repent, you follow the path that Matthew 18 outlines. So, it doesn't mean those things.

What does submission mean? Well, the word here gives us great insight. The Greek word that's translated "*be subject*" literally means to "order oneself under someone in authority." It's often used in a military setting of someone submitting to a commanding officer. That's the idea. There's someone above you who has been placed above you in rank. So, this word then, means that you must acknowledge the rightful authority of your husband in your marriage and that you must voluntarily order or rank yourself under their authority. That's what it means.

This, by the way, is the universal New Testament exhortation to women. Everywhere the New Testament directs wives, what they're to do, it deals with this issue, and it always uses the same word. That's true in Ephesians 5, Colossians 3, 1 Peter 3, and Titus 2.

In spite of the overwhelming evidence, there are voices in the Christian church today who say that the command for wives to submit actually reflects first century culture. It's not a timeless command. It was just a first century thing. These are Christian feminists, an oxymoron. Is this what the Scripture teaches? No, and let me give several arguments. If I had time I'd take you to all of these passages, let me just give them to you, you can look them up on your own. The biblical arguments for the wife's submission to her husband are not tied to first century culture, they are timeless.

First of all, here in this text, Ephesians 5, it's tied to Christ's lordship over His church. That's timeless. In 1 Corinthians 11:8 it's tied to the order of creation. In 1 Corinthians 11:9 it's tied to God's design of woman as a helper to the man. In chapter 3 of Colossians in verse 18 it's tied to what's appropriate for women under the lordship of Jesus Christ. And in chapter 2 of Titus, where we just saw, verse 1 of that chapter begins, I want you live this way, women and men, because it adorns the gospel, it adorns sound doctrine. None of those are tied to first century culture, they are all timeless.

So, the command for authority and submission in marriage is not a temporary, cultural matter tied to first century. Instead it reflects the divine design and order of creation. It is timeless. It is eternal in the sense of, in this age, in this world. Wives, let me just warn you that when you hear this command practically there're several wrong responses you can have to it.

The first wrong response you can have is just to reject it outright and to continue to struggle for the position of authority in your marriage and in your home. Sadly, there are some professing Christian women who do exactly that. I want you to understand that that is an act of rebellion against Jesus Christ's clear command.

There's another wrong response and this, unfortunately, is also very common. And that is to pretend submission to your husband, but to use subtle techniques to manipulate your husband and still get your own way. If that's how you think, if that's how you try to work your will, then you're not obeying this command.

A third wrong response is to mistake submission for keeping your mouth shut and never giving your husband wise counsel or expressing concerns about a decision that he makes. Listen, any leader of any worth whatsoever doesn't want a bunch of yes men or yes women around him. He wants people who will say, "Here's what I think, and here's why." And submission doesn't mean

that you don't do that, absolutely you ought to do that. My wife is my best and wisest counselor. So submission doesn't mean that.

Nor does submission, this is another wrong response: it is to mistake submission for being somehow inherently inferior to men. That is simply not true. Galatians 3 says we are all one. We are spiritually equal before God. There is no difference in our equality before God whatsoever. How do I know that's true when it comes to submission in marriage? Well, it's very interesting, Paul uses this same Greek verb "to be subject" in 1 Corinthians 15:28 of Christ's submission to the Father. Clearly, there is absolute equality of being between the Father and the Son, and yet the Son makes Himself subject to the Father. That proves this word has to do with one's role as God has outlined it, not inherent inferiority.

What is submission then? It is voluntarily putting yourself under your husband whom God has given a higher rank in your marriage. That's submission. Second question that Paul answers here is: to whom are wives to submit? To whom? Verse 22 is very clear, "... be subject to your own husbands..." Titus 2:5 says, "... being subject to their own husbands ..." This same expression is used in Colossians 3 and in 1 Peter 3. Now, there are a couple of implications from this idea that you are to submit to your own husband. First of all, it means that no wife is excluded. If you have a husband, you are responsible to submit. It also means that women are not subject to all men, only to their own husbands.

Nowhere does Scripture teach that every woman must submit to every man in every situation. In fact, only in marriage and in the church does God specifically restrict leadership to men. Ladies, you are not required to treat every man as if he were in a position of authority over you. You are to submit only to those men whom God has placed over you, whether it's in the government, or in the church, or certainly in marriage, it's own your husband.

This text is in no way teaching that women are inferior to men, less intelligent, less spiritual. It's not teaching the subjugation of all women to all men, instead it is simply teaching that God's designed order within marriage is for the husband to be the leader. Now, what if your husband isn't a believer? I know that's true of some of the folks who're a part of our church family. What do you do then? Doesn't change, turn to 1 Peter 3, 1 Peter 3:1, "In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands" [and then he makes this remarkable statement] "so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word," [in other words they're unbelievers. Submit to your husbands, ladies, so that if your husband is an unbeliever, he] "... may be won without a word by

...” [your] “behavior ... as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.” This is how you are to respond to your husband even if he’s an unbeliever.

You know, I’ve mentioned to you before our friends in California, Ron and Shirley. After 20 years of marriage, Ron, who was an avowed atheist and then an agnostic, was a very successful international businessman in the defense industry, he came to faith in Christ. Shirley admitted to me that for a number of years she didn’t practice this verse here in 1 Peter 3, in fact, her constant preaching at him only alienated him. But when she came to understand this verse, win him by your submission to his authority without a word, when she began to faithfully practice this over many years, Shirley believes to this day that that’s what the Lord used to bring her husband to Christ.

Every time I go to Grace, I see Shirley singing in the choir, and I see her husband serving the Lord as an usher at the church. This is God’s command to you if you’re unequally yoked. Submit to your husband, and allow your respectful and submissive behavior to illustrate your faith. Now, that’s the issue, to whom are you to submit? To your own husband.

There’s a third question that Paul answers here and that is, with what attitude are wives to submit? With what attitude? The first attitude is found in verse 22, “... as to the Lord” As to the Lord, submit to your husband as to the Lord. Wives, you are to submit to your own husband as if your husband were the Lord Himself. Don’t misunderstand, that doesn’t mean that your husband becomes a kind of replacement for Christ. It means simply that you are to acknowledge, “I have a responsibility to live in obedience to this command regardless of the kind of man my husband is. I’m to do it as if my husband were the Lord. How would I respond to my husband if he were the Lord Jesus Christ?”

Your submission to Christ, ladies, must always supersede your submission to your husband, but nevertheless, as Alexander Strauch puts it, “This little phrase tells us that the wife’s submission to her husband is a part of her submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.” Is that how you think about submitting to your husband? Do you do it as to Jesus Christ?

There’s another attitude that’s in this text as well. Look at Ephesians 5 and as Paul summarizes the teaching on marriage down in verse 33, he says this, “... the wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband.” Here’s another part of the attitude with which you’re to submit, and this is hard. You know, there are a lot of Christian wives who begrudgingly submit to their husbands because that’s what the Bible says, but they absolutely don’t respect him. And they show it in

their words, in their treatment, in their tone, a lot of different ways that disrespect comes out, just as we see it with our children's response to us.

Ladies, Paul doesn't ask here if your husband is worthy of respect. He doesn't ask whether or not you feel respectful. He doesn't ask whether you are more intelligent than he is, or whether you are more capable than he is. He doesn't even raise the issue of whether you're more godly or godlier than he is. He simply commands you to make a decision to obey God by choosing to respect your husband and to submit to him as you would do if your husband were Christ.

You say, "Well, Tom, respect my husband, you just don't know my husband." What if you have a hard time seeing anything in your husband to respect? You know, it's hard for me as a man to speak to that, so let me let a woman speak to that. Nancy Wilson in her book writes this,

"Obedience is the opener of eyes. Discontent blinds women to the many good qualities in their husbands, but when gratitude and respect are cultivated for their husbands ..." [in other words, when you intentionally decide to cultivate gratitude for your husband, to thank God for the things you can thank God for, when you think about the things that are worthy of respect in your husband, and there are things, she goes on to say] "... wives find more and more to respect."

When you cultivate gratitude and respect you'll be surprised at how many more things you see that there are to respect. What would your husband say if I brought him up on stage this morning and put him on the spot and said this, "Does your wife respect you? And is her submission to you as to the Lord?" Those are the attitudes of submission.

There's a fourth question Paul answers here and that is, for what reason are wives to submit? For what reason are wives to submit? Verse 23, "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church..." Notice how this relates. This goes back to the command, be subject, for, because, the husband is the head of the wife in the same way that Christ is the head of the church. What I want you to see ladies, is your submission to your husband's authority is not conditioned on anything in him. Doesn't mean he's worthy of it, doesn't mean he's a wonderful guy, doesn't mean he loves you as Christ loves the church and therefore you can submit to him.

Notice what Paul says. Submit because God has made your husband the head in your marriage. Notice he doesn't say the husband ought to be the head, he says he is the head of his wife in the

same way that Christ is the head of His church. I love the way one writer puts it, “Arguing with the fact of the husband’s headship in the home is like jumping off a cliff in order to quarrel with the law of gravity. Marshal the arguments on the way down however you like, you will eventually find yourself refuted in a messy way.”

The word “head” here in verse 23 is the common Greek word that is used for the physical head on the human body. Since the head is the top of the body, since it obviously directs the activity of the body, the word “head” came to be used figuratively in the sense of a leader or someone in a position of authority. We use the word in English that way, the word “head.” We speak of the head of state or the head of a department.

Christian feminists have tried to get around this. It’s a very hard text to get around and what they’ve argued is, “Well the word “head” doesn’t mean leader, it doesn’t mean authority, it means source or origin, just like the head is the sort of source, in some ways in directing the body.” That doesn’t hold up. If you were to study secular Greek, and you were to look at the 2,336 times this word “head” is used in secular Greek literature, you would find that not one time is it used of source or origin, always of authority. Now, men, that means that God has placed you in the inescapable position of leadership. You know, there are some men who just don’t like that idea. They don’t want to be responsible. Well, get over it because you are. That’s how God sees you, you are the head, you are responsible, whether you want it or not.

On the other hand, because of that sort of abdication of leadership, some women say, “Well, you know I have to lead because my husband doesn’t.” Let me take issue with you. Here, Paul says the husband is the head. He is the leader. It may not be the best kind of leadership, it may be extremely subtle and somewhat difficult to follow, but he is leading, And if you really want to follow him, stop talking and listen, and watch more carefully. Take the subtle cues and follow.

Now, in Titus 2:5, Paul adds another reason, we saw it a moment ago, for godly wives to submit to their husbands. Listen to this again, “... so that the word of God will not be dishonored.” Ladies, you dishonor the Scripture, you dishonor the gospel, when you fail to do what God has commanded in your marriage. Wives must submit because God made their husband their head in the same way that Christ is the head of the church.

Brings us to a fifth question Paul answers here and that is: in what areas are wives to submit to their husband? With regard to what? Look at verse 24, “... as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in” [what? In what?] “everything.” What could be

clearer than that? In everything. Now, my wife is a good teacher as you know, in fact it's a good thing that Scripture doesn't allow her to be a pastor, or I might be out of a job. But she's a good teacher, and she teaches this passage and it's it's interesting to me that when she teaches this passage to women's groups, every time she teaches it, the first questions she gets are "Well, yeah but what about...?" In everything.

My favorite example, (this actually happened, I don't think it happened here) is a woman who came up to her after she taught this passage and said, "Listen, Sheila, you don't understand, I can't submit to my husband because if I do, he will feed our children sugar." Wow. Ladies, let me ask you, what do you really think is going to hurt your children more, their having sugary cereal for breakfast, or a mother who flagrantly disobeys God's order in the home, who undermines the divine structure as God created it?

It's like the man who said, "You know when my wife and I were married we decided between us that she would make all the little decisions, and I would make all the big decisions. In 20 years of marriage there's never been one big decision." Carolyn Mahaney, in her book, *Feminine Appeal* lists some of the excuses that women give for not submitting. She writes,

"Here are some: All my husband ever does is watch ESPN. My husband is irresponsible with the finances. I have a husband who never disciplines the children. I'm married to a man who doesn't lead our family well."

I'm sure those things are true, probably represented to some extent here this morning. Here's how Mahaney concludes the list,

"None of these excuses is admissible. Unless a moral issue is at stake, [that is, a command of Scripture] we are obliged by Scripture to submit to our husbands. As Elisabeth Elliott bluntly states, God's Word does not give us any footnotes."

In the end, this doesn't mean, ladies, that you just do what your husband asks, and you do so sort of grudgingly. It means that you choose to build your life around him. How do you know what your husband wants? Try asking him. And even if he answers with a kind of mumble, just pay attention, you'll know. By the way, let me also say that submission doesn't mean that you can't graciously appeal to your husband if you feel he's making a bad decision. This is true in any authority relationship. Daniel 1 is a great example. Daniel models how to appeal to an authority, and you can make that appeal as well. But in the end, you must be willing to submit your will to

his just as someone would to a commanding officer in the military, even if he disagrees with the orders. Carolyn Mahaney writes,

“The question we must answer then is this:” [here it is, ladies] “Am I prepared to trust God to lead my husband to lead me?” “Am I prepared to trust God to lead my husband to lead me?”

Here’s how Susan Hunt puts it, “Submission is simply a demonstration of a woman’s confidence in the sovereign power of the Lord God.” “Submission is simply a demonstration of a woman’s confidence in the sovereign power of the Lord God.”

How can you gladly and willingly submit in everything to your own husband? By believing that God is bigger than your husband, and He is. Accept the divinely appointed role that God has given to you; bring yourself under the rank that God has given your husband. That’s the application for every Christian wife.

Now, ladies, let me recommend a couple of books for you as I did for your husbands last week. Two books, one is *The Excellent wife* by Martha Peace, and the other, a book I’ve referred to a couple times this morning, *Feminine Appeal*, which is really an exposition of Titus 2, by Carolyn Mahaney. I recommend both of those to you; they’ll help you understand your role according to Scripture in marriage.

But most of us here are not wives. What about the rest of us? What do these verses say to us? What if you’re a single woman? What if you’re a man? What if you’re a child? What does this passage say to you and to me? And it speaks incredibly loudly. There are two absolutely foundational implications in this passage for every person here this morning. First of all, there is a powerful reminder of our need of Jesus Christ, both in His perfect life and in His sacrificial death. You see, most of this passage is comparing Christ’s interaction with the church as a kind of template or model for what the husband/wife relationship should be like. But Paul makes one statement in this passage that has no resemblance to the husband/wife relationship whatsoever, and it stands out, it screams out of the passage.

Look at verse 23, of Christ he says, “... He Himself *being* the Savior of the body.” You see that word *Savior*? It’s used 24 times in the New Testament; never once is it used of a human being. It’s only used of God and of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This is not something any husband can do, this is something we all need Christ to do for us. And this passage reminds us of why we

need Christ and the gospel. Because not one of us here this morning, not one of us, has lived a life of perfection in terms of our submission to the authorities God has placed over us. And yet, it's one of the Ten Commandments. We're to submit to human authority, one of God's greatest responsibilities given to every one of us. But the truth is every one of us is a rebel at heart, rebel against God and a rebel against every human authority that He's put over us.

And here's what I want you to get. Break just one commandment, according to James, and you've broken them all. So, our rebellion to human authority in our life is enough to damn us alone, if we had obeyed every other command of God. Our response to those authorities, starting with our parents: the disrespect, the whining and complaining, the disobedience, the lying, the deception, that alone, is enough to send us to eternal hell. But the gospel teaches us that Jesus our Lord lived a perfect human life, a perfect human life of submission to authority.

He perfectly submitted to the Father. He perfectly submitted to His human parents. Imagine that, never once was He disrespectful in His heart. Never once did He disrespect in the words He spoke. Never once did He disobey them. Never once did He lie and deceive them. He lived a perfect life in regard to every legitimate human authority. And then; although, here was a Person who had never rebelled, He died as though He'd lived a life of rebellion so that every sinner who believes in Him, God credits their rebellion to Jesus Christ, and on the cross treats Jesus Christ as though He had lived that life of rebellion.

And then God credits Jesus' perfect life of obedience and submission to that believing sinner and forever treats us as if we had lived in perfect respect and perfect submission to authority. That's the gospel, and this passage reminds us that we all need a Savior because we all have rebelled against the authorities in our lives.

But there's another reminder here to all of us. In these verses, there is a reminder to us of the responsibility of every Christian to Jesus Christ our Lord. Notice again verses 23 and 24, but let me reverse the wording so that you get the point. In the same way that the husband is the head of the wife, so also Christ is the head of the church. He is the head of every Christian. And just as wives must submit to their own husbands in everything, even so every Christian must submit to Christ in everything.

Let me ask you honestly this morning, and I want you, Christian, to really answer this question in your heart. Does your submission to Jesus Christ look like the submission God demands in this passage of wives to their husbands? It's supposed to; it's supposed to be exactly the same.

How do you submit to Jesus Christ in everything? You submit to what's between the covers of this book. You submit to His will as it's revealed in the Word of God. Is that how you think about Jesus Christ? Or do you just think of Him as some way to sort of get your fire insurance out of hell? The Bible knows nothing of that. He is your Head, if you're a Christian, and you are to submit to Him in the same way that a Christian wife is to submit to her husband.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for this amazing passage. Lord, it certainly runs counter to the culture in which we live, the times. It almost sounds heretical to even speak these words, and yet Father, you are the Creator. You are the One who designed marriage. You're the One who established the divine order within marriage. And so, Father, we, this morning have looked at Your Word, and we have said, let You be true, and every man a liar.

Father, I pray that You would use this passage in our lives. I pray for the Christian women here who have husbands. Lord, may they practice this passage, may they embrace their order, their rank within the marriage, just as the eternal Son has to You, Father.

And Father, I pray for all of us. I pray for those here this morning who have not embraced Jesus Christ. Help them to see their rebellion, help them to see what they deserve apart from grace, apart from what Christ did, and may they turn in faith and repentance, seeking the forgiveness that's provided in Him, so that His perfect submission can be credited by You to them, so that You would forever treat them as if they had lived His perfect life.

And Father, I pray for all of us who are already in Christ. Help us to see in this passage our own response to Jesus our Lord. May we submit to Him in everything, with all of our hearts, willingly, gladly, obeying what He says from the heart.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.