

Ephesians

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 December 2016

Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] We are moving toward the conclusion of Ephesians chapter 5, and the apostle is going to close out the chapter, having made an analogy between the marriage that exists between a man and a woman and the marriage that exists between the believer and the Lord Jesus Christ.

These are both unions, and they both have spiritual components to them, to say the least. And as Paul is actually talking about the husband and wife relationship, and I'll just, well, I'll start with verse 25, and we'll reserve reading until we get down to verse 33 for the newer content, because we've covered this in the past.

But just to establish the context, let us begin with verse 24 on 5b. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

Now, here it is very apparent that he's talking about the church as the body of Christ. And the washing of the water of the word, of course, is the washing of regeneration that Titus refers to in chapter 3 and verse 5.

[1 : 31] And this washing of the water by the word has really nothing to do with water baptism, although that is very often read into that. But this washing is the spiritual cleansing and regeneration that comes about when one puts one's personal faith and trust in Christ.

We are cleansed by the word of God. And he continues in saying that he might present it to himself a glorious church.

And here it's very obvious that he's talking about the church as the body of Christ, as opposed to the bride, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy, that is, separated and without blemish.

And this idea of without blemish reminds us of the positional relationship that we have in Christ. Our position in Christ is one of perfection because it is the very righteousness of Christ himself.

And it is not merely imparted to us. It is imputed to us. And by being imputed means that it is placed in us, not merely on us.

[2 : 54] So we possess the very righteousness of Christ. That is our position. That is our standing. That is the way God views us.

Unfortunately, it is not true of our behavior or our walk or our state, because that continues to be demonstrated by a flawed human being.

We have a standing before God that is absolutely perfect. But in our practice, we are all in process.

We are all growing and maturing and developing. It's simply another way of saying, spiritually speaking, we have not yet arrived. Our practice does not measure up to our position.

Our position is fixed and static and perfect because it is the result of the work of Christ. What else could it be? But our state, our practice, our doing is the result of us in our flesh and in our spirit.

[4 : 07] So it is mixed and we have not arrived. We have arrived insofar as our state is concerned. I mean, insofar as our standing is concerned.

We have arrived. It's perfect. Nothing can be added to it. Nothing can be taken from it. This is Christ in us, the absolute guarantee of glory. And as I mentioned, our practice is something else.

That's where we grow. You do not grow. You do not grow in your standing. You grow in your state. Our state is that which is what we produce.

But our standing is that which Christ produces. So, one is perfect. The other, of course, is imperfect. So, verse 28, So, He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church.

[5 : 14] For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they too shall be one flesh.

This is a great mystery. Now, here he's not actually talking about man and a wife being joined together into one flesh. It's a great mystery.

And he goes on to qualify that, even though he's been using this analogy, and has been making the comparison between a husband and wife and their marriage, and the believer in Christ, and the marriage, the spiritual marriage that we have in him.

But when he says, this is a great mystery, he's not talking about the husband and wife relationship, as he goes on to clarify. He says, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.

That's the mystery element. And we explained earlier, when we saw this surface way back in Ephesians chapter 3, that probably the best synonym for the word mystery is secret.

[6 : 27] And Paul is saying, I speak concerning this great secret, I speak concerning Christ and the Church. And he's already laid that out, how that which made it a secret, or a mystery, is the fact that this earth was here in existence for thousands of years, and never was a hint even given that God was going to do something that would amalgamate Jews and Gentiles together.

After all, in the beginning, when he chose Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, chief characteristic that was supposed to be true of these people, who would be known as the Jewish people, was their separateness.

I've called you to be a holy people, which means a separated people. Separated from whom? Separated from all the rest of the world. All the rest of the world would be Gentiles.

But you, you who are of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you are to be distinct, removed, separate from them.

That's the meaning of the word holy, which is also related to the word sanctify, or sanctify, if you will, or set apart, or make different.

[7 : 57] And all through their early existence clear up until you get into the book of Acts. It was God's declared intention, which he made very, very clear, that the Jewish people were to be separated from everyone else.

Now, same time, they were entrusted with the responsibility of being a light to the Gentiles. Why are you going to be a light to them if you're separated from them?

And they are forbidden to give their children in marriage to non-Jews or to take the children of non-Jews for the marriage of their sons and daughters.

That was strictly verboten. So, let me ask you a question. How is it that they are going to be a light to the Gentiles if they are commanded to be separate from them and seemingly have little or no contact with them?

Exactly how are you going to do that? And can you not see a kind of parallel here? How that we as believers are to be separate from the world?

[9 : 04] We are to be a peculiar people as well. We are to be different from the world. And yet, we are charged with the responsibility of letting our light shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

So, we've got this curious situation here whereby we are not to be like these people. We are not to have their standards and values.

We are not to mimic their conduct. We are to be separate from them. And at the same time, we are charged with the responsibility of reaching out to them.

So, can you see the tension that exists here? It is part of being in the world but not of the world. We cannot have fellowship with the world.

But can we have friendship with unbelievers? Of course we can. And we are supposed to. Someone has said, he who would win some must be winsome.

[10 : 10] And we must reach out to those who are without Christ. Because there was a time when somebody reached out to you. So, the parallel is the same as it is with the Jew and the Gentile in the Old Testament as opposed to the believer today.

We are to be in the world, not of the world. We are not to present a holier-than-thou attitude or be condemning or look down our nose on those who are unbelievers.

But, in a spirit of love and compassion, we are to use every opportunity we have to share the gospel with them. Because apart from a personal relationship to Christ, they are just as lost as we were before we came to faith in Him.

Anybody have comments? Dana? Dana? And I'm butchering the verse, but Christ, when did we show love to you? And when you fed the hungry, you were feeding me.

Yeah. And the hungry, they don't say whether the hungry is a believer or not believer. True. Absolutely. Someone said it's difficult to preach the gospel to a man who has an empty stomach.

[11 : 22] And that's a pretty good thing to keep in mind. And so, there is the limit of our involvement in that we are to reach out.

We are to befriend. We are to love these people who are outside of Christ. And yet, at the same time, we are not to adopt their standards, their values, their norms, etc.

We are to remain distinct from that. So, sometimes, it presents a fine line to walk. And yet, that's what we're called upon to do. And nobody said it would be easy, but that's part of our responsibility.

Yes, Raj? There's an actual marriage that I've crucified. When Abraham believed God, and God was used for him and likened him, is that a temporary thing that one saw?

I guess the question would be boiled down to, was there such a thing as the security of the believer in the Old Testament? And I cannot conceive of God operating in any other way, frankly.

[12 : 32] When it says that, even predating Abraham, when it says, And Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, I don't have any reason at all to believe that that grace was ever withdrawn from Noah, or that it was ever threatened to be withdrawn from Noah.

The grace of God is such an incomprehensible, such a splendid thing that when it is dispensed, it seems to me to come with the full force of the one who gives it.

And it's just irrevocable from what I can see. I cannot conceive of God dispensing his grace upon someone, and then withdrawing it.

Because the very act of receiving grace means that it was something that was imparted without human desert.

Because if there is any human deservedness of grace, it immediately ceases to be grace. Then it is reward on the basis of merit.

[13 : 49] But grace is the complete opposite of that. Grace is dispensed where it is not deserved and not earned. And this is one reason that I have often said, Anybody who thinks they deserve to go to heaven isn't going.

It's as simple as that. Grace can only be imparted where there is no desert and no favor required.

It is dependent upon the giver, not upon the receiver. Joe? To go back to what you were talking about, you were reaching out.

You should reach out, you know. And your letter you sent around here. That's an example of reaching out to the children there, and then the opportunity is there to witness to them, those children.

It mentions it in that letter that you passed around there. True. Absolutely. Absolutely. Give them an education, you know, nurturing, and at the same time, reach out to them if they're going through the message.

[14 : 56] And the reaching out takes all sizes, shapes, and forms, and methods, and ways that... You know, there is almost no limit to the different ways and avenues that love can be expressed.

There's almost no limit to the way that love can be expressed. And as Joe said, just the caring for this kid, this little boy, Gad, is an act of love.

And there are so many other things that you can do. And a lot of times, believers find themselves engaged in acts of love and care and compassion, and they aren't even thinking about it.

You know, they're just kind of doing what comes natural, and they're not even thinking, now I'm really showing love to this person. They don't even think about it. You just do it. And that's largely where we are to come to.

That's largely what is meant by operating in the spirit rather than in the flesh, where these opportunities are seized and acted upon without deliberation of forethought.

[16 : 12] You just kind of... You just do it. That's all. Yeah. Sometimes somebody comes up and says to you, oh, that was a nice thing you did, and you wonder, what did I do? Yeah. What are you talking about?

Yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. It's a precious thing. I guess that's just you anymore. You know, that's just the way you are. You go, I'm doing that. Yeah. It should become second nature to us, and that's what this is largely all about.

So, the mystery then that he's talking about, in connection with all of this division that was to exist, what God had in mind all along, that he never revealed, nobody had an inkling of it.

The prophets, the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, nobody mentioned it. It's not in the Psalms, not anywhere in the Old Testament, is that God is going to take those people, whom he designated as separate and distinct from all the rest of the world, and he's going to bring them together.

And he's going to bring them together in a spiritual relationship that will be such that it will transcend both the life of the Jew and the life of the Gentile.

[17 : 31] It will be bigger and greater than what either of those experienced in and of themselves. It will be a union placing those together with all of the barriers and distinctions gone, so that there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female.

You are all on the same level, same plane in Christ Jesus. And when the Apostle Paul was given that charge, that revelation, that that's what he was to begin preaching and teaching, I can imagine, Paul said, What?

What? I mean, this is, this is so contrary to everything that I and my forefathers have been involved in.

And now, this distinction, by the way, it was a distinction of which the Jew was very, very proud.

Now, as the chosen people of God, Paul says in Philippians 3, Do I have anything to boast about? I'll tell you what, listen, if somebody wants to know what their bragging rights are, I'll put my pedigree alongside anybody else.

[19 : 00] I, Saul of Tarsus, Paul the Apostle, I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews. My mama was a Jew, and my daddy was a Jew. I'm of the tribe of Benjamin.

I was circumcised the eighth day. And I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and all the rest of this stuff. And then he ends up by saying, In all those things that were counted gain to me, all the things that the average person would look upon and say, Wow!

Look at those qualifications. Paul says, You know what? I count them all, but dumb, but rubbish, in comparison to the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

All of those things that gave me bragging rights before, they're all worthless, compared to knowing Christ. And that's what he's talking about the mystery. You're probably three years of seminary.

Yeah, well, absolutely. You know, he had a hard way to go. I mean, you talk about, talk about what I'm talking about. This was earth-shaking.

[20 : 10] I mean, this was the greatest, most cataclysmic thing ever to come upon the Jewish people, and at the time, the Gentile people. Now, it wasn't nearly the stretch for Gentiles that it was for the Jew.

And when Paul said, when Paul said, I think it was in Acts 13, when he was rebuffed again by the Jews, who just thought that this man who is saying these things, he's teaching against the law of Moses, he deserves to die.

And some have taken upon themselves to make a vow of killing. They weren't going to eat or drink until they killed him. That's how they viewed that. And here he is charged with the responsibility of disseminating that information.

You talk about a hot potato. I mean, this was really something. And wherever he went, he was rebuffed, he was stoned, he was beaten, he was ridiculed.

And Paul said, I think it was in Acts 13, he said to this Jewish mob constituency that was rejecting him, he said, seeing as how you consider yourselves unworthy of eternal life.

[21 : 29] Is that what you're saying? That you're not even worthy of being saved? That you're not worthy? Is that what you're saying? Lo, I turn to the Gentiles, and they will hear it.

Boy, they did. And as the Gentile constituency began to grow, because, listen, nobody, none of the false deities and idols that these Gentiles were worshipping, they were all into paganism.

Paul reminds them of that back in Ephesians 1 and 2, where they were without Christ at that time, children of disobedience, etc., etc. And now, he gives them this message.

This is the first message that they had ever heard that had anything to do with the forgiveness of their sins and a personal connection with the God of creation.

None of the pagan deities had anything like that to offer. And this was the big ticket item, because, listen, guys, there is absolutely no greater need than a human being has than the forgiveness of God.

[22 : 51] Nothing, no health, no wealth, no nothing, transcends the need that every one of us has for God's forgiveness. And here, the Apostle Paul is offering God's forgiveness, not just to God's chosen people, but to everybody.

Wow. That was blockbuster news. And he put it over with great enthusiasm, great difficulty, and in the midst of great opposition.

And you know what? The opposition continues. The opposition continues. If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, whose minds the God of this age hath blinded.

He has skewed their thinking processes, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, which is the image of God, should shine unto them. That's the message that Paul had to proclaim.

And that's the same one that we've got to proclaim today. And you know what? That, especially in a lot of circles, it isn't any better received today than it was then. There are still those who would ostracize and deny the truth of the gospel.

[24 : 11] So that's this mystery that he's talking about here when he says, but I speak. This is a great mystery. And look at some of the ways this is translated. He says, this is a profound truth. Weymouth says, this is a great truth hitherto kept secret.

Kept secret until whom? Until Paul. Nobody mentioned this until Paul started preaching it. And then it became the message.

And it remains the message today. This is a profound truth. And here, Philip says, the marriage relationship is doubtless a great mystery, but that's not what he's talking about.

He's talking about Christ and the church. And that's what the next verse makes clear. That I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, back to what I was saying about marriage, let every one of you, in particular, so love his wife even as himself.

Fellas, in reality, we ought to love our wives more than we love ourselves. Simply because it is the ability to do so that we have been given.

[25 : 32] And this means that your wife is a full 50% partner of the relationship. She's not 49.

she's a full 50% of the relationship. And that our responsibility is to love our wife even as ourselves. And we've given you a definition of love the way that this, and by the way, the word for love here is agape.

It's the same word that is translated love in John 3.16. And it literally means that when you love with agape love, it means you do the thing and you say the thing that is in the best interest of the object of your love whether, whether you feel like it or not.

Because real biblical love is not based on emotions and how you feel. Biblical love is based on the will. And we have charge of our will, of our volition.

We are to use our volition to love and even as ourselves and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

[26 : 50] And that will conclude that page. And if you will keep the sheet for 6A and 6B, we'll begin there in our next session together. Any other comments or questions anybody might have before we enjoy our breakfast?

Anyone? Thank you, ma'am, for the good service we do appreciate. Okay, guys, have a great day.