

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes April 16, 2008

Ephesians 5:21-33

- 21: Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.
- 22: Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord.
- 23: For the husband is the head of the wife
as Christ is the head of the church, his body,
and is himself its Savior.
- 24: As the church is subject to Christ,
so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.
- 25: Husbands, love your wives,
as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,
- 26: that he might sanctify her,
having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,
- 27: that he might present the church to himself in splendor,
without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
that she might be holy and without blemish.
- 28: Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.
He who loves his wife loves himself.
- 29: For no man ever hates his own flesh,
but nourishes and cherishes it,
as Christ does the church,
- 30: because we are members of his body.
- 31: *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh."*
- 32: This mystery is a profound one,
and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church;
- 33: however, let each one of you love his wife as himself,
and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Introduction: Today we continue studying some Scriptures that many Christians would just as well St. Paul had not written. Many look at these verses and then just merely ignore them as leftovers from a more primitive, less civilized age, plagued by ignorance and particularly chauvinism, claiming that they no longer apply to our modern enlightened society. Why this avoidance? Because these verses deal with marriage, family, and work, but particularly the more difficult issue of the hierarchical structure within the family. But just look around us, at the myriad of broken marriages and dysfunctional families, and ask the question, are we in fact more civilized and better off in this our modern enlightenment? Maybe we ought to listen to the verses we were discussing today on ***Deep in Scripture***.

House cleaning items...

- Today's Special: *"Catholic for a Reason IV: Scripture and the Mystery of Marriage and Family Life,"* edited by Scott Hahn and Regis Flaherty
- We want your input!!! Phone: On air phone number: **1-800-664-5110** Off air: **1-740-450-1175**
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REVIEW: Today we're continuing our discussion of Ephesians:

- **In the first three chapters**, St. Paul describes the changes that take place in our lives once we have heard, believed, and then were sealed with the Holy Spirit in baptism, while **in the second half of Ephesians**, St. Paul exhorts the newly baptized Gentile believers how they must live out this new life, which requires surrender and faithful obedience.
 - In other words, St. Paul, in what we believe was a homily to be read at the liturgy when newly baptized Gentile believers were received into the Church, first gives them truth / facts about their new life in Christ, and then tells them how their lives ought to be different.
- **Last week we began studying 5:21-6:10 on the relationships of marriage, family, and work within the context of the Body of Christ.**
 - **With verses 21 & 32, we looked first at some important background / contextual issues:**
 - i. **“Lenses of interpretation”**: *How can we be sure that we are accurately hearing & applying these verses to our lives today?*
The Church → Tradition & Scripture → our lives
 - ii. **The Mystery of the Church: the Body of Christ (32)**
 - iii. **The hierarchical structure of the Church / the Body of Christ: (4:11-13)**
 - iv. **The underlying requirement of mutual submission within the Body of Christ: (21)**
 - v. **In this verse, another important underlying assumption: (21)**
“[being] subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.
 - “Reverence” = “phobio” = usually “fear”; “the fear of God”
- **This week we'll examine the rolls of Husband and Wife:**
 - **The importance of formation of Conscience:**
 - St. Paul addressing the spiritual battle (6:12)
“For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”
 - Usually we think of this battle as the external struggles we have with the world, i.e., people in the world, & therefore, hear St. Paul as giving us rules for living out our relationships in the world.
 - But the biggest battles we face are internal, within ourselves, as we deal with attitudes, feelings, memories, motives, injuries, & “voices.”
 - **Our mind can be understood as a battle of “voices”**:
 - Conscience:
 - Truths of Natural law;
 - Learned truths: natural and supernatural;
 - Learned behavior (“should” & “ought”).
 - “The voices”:
 - the world
 - the flesh (concupiscence, memory, will, etc.)
 - the devil
 - All of our external battles involves these internal battles.
 - In this passage, St. Paul is forming their consciences so they can successfully fight both the internal & external battles, specifically within marriage.
- **What are the unchangeable truths within the passage?**
 - (1) **The Mystery of Christ and the Church:**
 - The Church is the Body of Christ (5:23)
 - Jesus Christ is the Savior of the Church (23)

- Christ is the head of the Church, his body (23)
- The Church is subject to Christ (24)
- Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her (25)
- **Why?** “that he might sanctify her, (26-27)
having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,
that he might present the church to himself in splendor,
without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
that she might be holy and without blemish.”
- Christ nourishes and cherishes the Church (29)
- We are members of the Church, his body (30)

(2) **The Scriptural / Traditional understanding of marriage (they had been taught):**

- The exclusivity & oneness of the marital bond (31) from Genesis 2:24 (LXX)
*"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh."*

(3) **The headship of the husband (23):**

*"For the husband is the head of the wife
as Christ is the head of the church, his body..."*

- Not presented as a negotiable opinion but as a fact; St. Paul also emphasized this to the believers at Corinth, 1 Cor 11:1-3
"Be imitators of me as I imitate Christ. I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you. But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God."
- Possibly a truth of natural law ... but at least a firm tradition based upon the truth of the headship of Christ & the hierarchy of the Church.
- *What has been the problem with "headship" throughout history?*
 - *Runs against all the "voices" from within & without.*
 - *Husbands, as well as priests, bishops, & popes, have not always followed St. Paul's instructions very well!*

▪ **What voices were they battling:**

- **"the World"**
 - Jewish
 - Gentile / pagan Greek
- **"the flesh"**
 - The ongoing battle for supremacy, as a result of the Fall: Genesis 3:16
*To the woman he said,
"I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children,
yet **your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you.**"*
 - *"your desire" = not an affectionate desire, but a desire for control!*
 - Therefore, the natural inclination of spouses is to control one another.
 - Selfishness, pride, bitterness, anger, jealousy, etc.: "What about me?!"
- **"the devil"**
 - (6:12; 1 Peter 5:8-9) The devil will attempt to destroy the Body one cell at a time.

▪ **So what specific instructions (shoulds & oughts) does St. Paul give?**

- **Mutual submission of all within the Body of Christ (21):**
"Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ."
 - What does "submission" mean?

- This is based on living out Christ's instructions: John 13:34-35

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
- Means treating one another as Christ treated / treats us: 4:1-3

"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Romans 12:9-10

"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor."

1 Peter 5:5-6

"Likewise you that are younger be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you."
- **Wives are to be subject in everything to their husbands (22-24):**

"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord.

*For the husband is the head of the wife
as Christ is the head of the church, his body,
and is himself its Savior.*

***As the church is subject to Christ,
so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands."***

 - St. Paul repeated this to the Colossians (3:18):

"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord."
 - Submission is not detached obeisance, but includes respect (33):

"...let the wife see that she respects her husband."

 - **Note:** "respect" = *phobatai* = reverence; fear.
- **Husbands love their wives as Christ loved the Church (25-30, 33a):**

25: *Husbands, love your wives,
as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,*

26: *that he might sanctify her,
having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,*

27: *that he might present the church to himself in splendor,
without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
that she might be holy and without blemish.*

28: *Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.
He who loves his wife loves himself.*

29: *For no man ever hates his own flesh,
but nourishes and cherishes it,
as Christ does the church,*

30: *because we are members of his body.*

33: *... let each one of you love his wife as himself...*
- **Note:**
 - In neither case, is one spouse to force the other to live out their rolls.
 - Each to live by their conscience in reverence (fear) of Christ.
 - In the same way, we give our love & obedience to Christ freely, out of gratitude, so are a husband and wife to give love & obedience to each other freely.

- **So, how does this apply today, in today's world?**

- St. Paul's words to the Corinthians still apply:

"Be imitators of me as I imitate Christ. I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you. But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God."

- We must correctly form our consciences & live by them, not by the voices that try to destroy the Body of Christ by destroying our marriages.
- We must correctly form the consciences of our children, both by words & our model...we must be able to tell them as St. Paul tells us, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ."