



April 16, 2021

Portrait of a Healed Relationship

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. - (Ephesians 5:22-29)

In Ephesians we find the teaching of mutual submission and the responsibilities of the husband and of the wife. Please note that submission is not assigning our responsibility to others, abandoning our own judgment, or allowing others to simply dictate to us. It is setting aside our own ideas as supreme and our own will as ultimate, freeing us from the burden of having our own way and of being all-wise in our own eyes. Saint Paul's instruction about submission comes within the larger teaching about the community of love.

The central point concerning the calling of human beings is to give themselves to the good, even up to the point of dying for it. Paul is saying here that we are to give ourselves up. The husband is to give himself up for the wife as Christ gave himself up for the church. I doubt that there are many wives in the world who confidently feel their husbands have loved them in that way. Some have. The pity is that many times, even if they have been loved this way, it is impossible for them to be confident about it because of their own lack of appropriate self-image. In such cases it is quite beside the point whether the husband loves the wife that way or not; it would be impossible for her to be confident about it and receive it. Those aspects of doubt and mistrust about ourselves lead us into the games we play in love relationships as we try to get the other person to prove their love. Of course, this always flows from a completely neurotic feeling of worthlessness that no human "proof" can dissuade.

Notice the parallel Paul made between marriage and the church. In the case of the church, whose members have these same feelings of worthlessness and other problems, Christ intends to present it to himself as glorious nonetheless. That is why he came. Likewise, the husband is to think of the wife in this same way, that she would be glorious, and that he would help her to be glorious. The wife, too, would think in the same way regarding the glory of her husband. It almost makes your heart break with grief as you think about the way human relationships actually go and how far short of this they fall.

Reflect: *Remember, the example of husbands and wives are meant to illustrate why there are people. People exist to love as Jesus loved. Indeed, the aim of God in human history is the creation of an all-inclusive community of loving persons with himself at the center of that community—as its prime sustainer and most glorious inhabitant. (Q) As you embrace God's vision for your life, how would this begin to reshape your relationships?*