

Introduction: Why We’re on a Side Path

This Week

- As we’ve been studying Paul’s letter to Titus on Wednesday evenings, we’ve noticed the apostle’s concern for families and the connection between Church and the Christian family.
 - The first area of examination in the qualifications for elders in the Church is the candidate’s family (Titus 1:5,6).
 - Paul’s concern for false teachers in the Church is first and foremost that “*they are upsetting whole families*” (1:11).
 - The apostle commands “*older women*” to grow in Christian character “*so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored*” (2:3-5).
- Last week we saw in Romans 1:24-27 that God shows His wrath against unbelieving humanity’s idolatry by giving them over to immorality.
 - God created humanity as two genders which are fundamental biological realities – and both genders together reflect His image (Genesis 1:27).¹ God ordained marriage between one man and one woman in the creation (Genesis 2:24,25). He blessed this union with the command, “*be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth*” (Genesis 1:28).

¹ Theologians and Bible teachers have given us a lot of creative suggestions as to what they think God’s “*image*” in humanity is (free will, love, intelligence, etc.). The text reveals clearly what the “*image*” is, however: His “*image*” which was to be reflected in humanity is His sovereign reign as King over all. “*Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule*” (Genesis 1:26).

- “*Men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...even though they knew God,*” reject what God has clearly revealed about Himself in the creation (their very bodies being part of that revealing creation). In response to their idolatry, “*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven*” by His giving unbelieving humanity over to their immorality (which He normally restrains in His grace).² We see this clearly as God-created gender is denied, God-ordained marriage is denied, and the womb is the arena of the greatest genocide in human history.
- Having seen the vain “*exchange*” of humanity, I want us to see how the Gospel-storying in the creation ordinance of marriage is restored in Christ. To do that we’ll step away from Romans for this week and go to Paul’s letter to the Church in Ephesus.

Walk, Understand, Be Filled (5:15-18)

^{5:15}Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, ^{5:16}making the most of your time, because the days are evil. ^{5:17}So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ^{5:18}And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit...

- In this section, we get three commands. While we are going to focus on the last command, “*be filled with the Spirit,*” it’s worth taking a look at the first two commands, as well.

Be Careful How You Walk

- Paul uses the verb “*walk*” in this letter more than in any other letter he writes.³ This metaphor for life is based on the O.T. idea of life being a “*way*” (68 times in

² As we said last week: “**...when human beings refuse to give the Creator glory and worship creation, God smashes the Gospel picture in their physical relationships. This is ‘the wrath of God’ revealed.**”

³ 2:2,10; 4:1,17; 5:2,8,15.

Proverbs alone!) we through which we “walk” (again, 37 times in Proverbs).⁴ Paul’s use of “walk” and “wise” together are definitely echoes of Proverbs language.

- Why walk wisely? “*The days are evil,*” and we must use our time in this world with God’s wisdom.

Understand What the Will of the Lord Is

- Colossians 1:9,10 connects being “*filled with the knowledge of His will*” and a “*walk...worth of the Lord.*”
- Similarly, Paul commands “*do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is*” (Romans 12:2).

Be Filled with the Spirit

- This command, “*be filled with the Spirit,*” is followed by a very practical description of a Spirit-filled life. It shows itself in our relationships. This command is a structural key to understanding this whole section:
 - Command: Be filled with the Spirit (5:18b)
 - Spirit-filled life in the gathered Church (5:19-21)
 - Spirit-filled life in Christian marriage (5:22-33)
 - Spirit-filled life for Christian children (6:1-3)
 - Spirit-filled life in Christian child-rearing (6:4)
 - Spirit-filled life for Christian bondslaves (6:5-8)
 - Spirit-filled life for Christian masters (6:9)
- Today we are going to look at the first two categories: Spirit-filled life in the gathered Church and Spirit-filled life in Christian marriage. We’re going to look at these

together because Paul links them in a very important theological way.

A Spirit-Filled Life in the Gathered Church (5:19-21)

5:19...*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 5:20always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; 5:21and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.*

- Modern Christian worship gives the impression that the goal of worship services (especially the music) is to provide an emotional-spiritual connection between the individual and God. That’s only half the purpose! Paul describes something very different here. The Spirit-filled role of music in the gathered Church is twofold:
 - When we are singing, we are “*speaking to each other.*” Our singing is meant to teach and encourage. We do not disconnect from each other until it’s just “me and God” in the musical moment. There is a horizontal responsibility to our fellowship in music.
 - Singing should have a sincerity to it. While we are singing, we should be doing so “*with your heart to the Lord.*” The exterior aspect of congregational singing is to teach and help each other. The interior aspect of congregational singing is Godward.
- We are also to be a thankful people in all things.
- Finally, the Spirit-filled congregation must “*be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.*”
 - Paul has already told the Ephesians to “*to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called...showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (4:1-3). Just as being “*filled with the Spirit*” shows itself in mutual submission in the congregation,

⁴ It’s significant that Christianity was called “the Way” in its early days (Acts 9:2; 16:17; 18:25,26; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22).

preserving “*the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” involves “*showing tolerance for one another in love.*”

- Conversely, grieving “*the Holy Spirit of God, by Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption,*” involves “*falsehood,*” speaking an “*unwholesome word,*” or “*bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander...along with all malice*” (4:25-32). Words that disrupt the covenant family grieve the Spirit and do not show being filled with the Spirit.⁵
- Summing up (to this point), being “*filled with the Spirit*” has definite visible traits in a congregation: worship in which we look to edify each other, thankfulness, and a selfless regard for others. How are we doing?

A Spirit-Filled Life in Christian Marriage (5:22-33)

Wives: the Church Is Subject to Christ (5:22-24)

5:22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 5:23 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. 5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

- In the original Greek of 5:22, there is no verb. Our English translations supply it. So where do we get the verb? From the previous verse, 5:21.⁶ A literal

⁵ Similarly, Paul teaches the Philippians that the “*fellowship of the Spirit*” looks like “*being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, [being] united in spirit, intent on one purpose...[doing] nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves...not merely [looking] out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others*” (Philippians 2:1-4).

⁶ Technically, “*be subject*” in 5:21 is not a verb, either – it’s a participle. The imperative “*be filled*” is a verb in 5:18b. There is not

rendering of the Greek of 5:21,22 says, “**Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ, wives to your own husbands as to the Lord...**” There is a grammatical and theological connection between verses 21 and 22. The mutual submission of the members of the Church to each other is to be the example for wives in their submission to their husbands.

- I don’t think it’s off the mark to say that a failure of Christian wives to submit to their husbands can be traced to a failure of the Christian Church to rightly submit to one another.⁷
- Christian wives are to display the submission of the Church to Christ in their attitudes to their husbands. This is not qualified, by the way. The husband is not required to even be a believer for this to be the right way for Christian wives to behave (1 Corinthians 7:13-16; 1 Peter 3:1).⁸

another verb until 5:23, where Paul says “*the husband is the head of the wife.*” All the other words rendered as verbs in 5:19-22 are participles. Why does Paul do this? It continually reminds us that “*speaking...singing...making melody...giving thanks...be subject to one another*” are all part of being “*filled with the Spirit.*”

⁷ Again, with what we’ve seen in Titus (see my introductory comments in the beginning of these notes), there is a connection between the congregation and individual Christian marriages. If the congregation is weak in doctrine and love, we will see this in our homes. Further, the “*older women*” are to be teaching “*the young women to love their husbands*” and to be “*subject to their own husbands*” (Titus 2:3-5). I hear a lot of older women complaining about their husbands. Discipleship requires more, Church. Die to your bitter complaining, older sisters in the Lord. The success of the next generation requires it.

⁸ This does not mean wives should submit in emotional or physical abuse. In the case of emotional abuse, the husband should be disciplined by the Church in accord with Matthew 18:15-20. In the

Husbands: Christ Loved the Church (5:25-33)

^{5:25}Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ^{5:26}so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ^{5:27}that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. ^{5:28}So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; ^{5:29}for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, ^{5:30}because we are members of His body. ^{5:31}For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. ^{5:32}This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. ^{5:33}Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

The Love of God

- **READ Deuteronomy 7:7.** God’s love is not based on performance or worthiness, but on His ancient promise to love. It is solely by grace.
- **READ John 3:16.** God’s love is seen in that He gave the best He had (His Son) to save those under penalty of eternal death (us). His gift was not based on our worthiness, but on His gracious love.
- “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).
- “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I

case of physical abuse, God has ordained civil authorities to bring “wrath on the one who practices evil” (Romans 13:1-7). **Seek appropriate help immediately in either of these cases.** This is not what Paul means when he tells wives to “be subject to their own husbands.”

now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20).

- “...when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy” (Titus 3:4,5).
- “By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins...we love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:9,10,19).

Husbands, Do You Gospel?

- All those verses above are your manual for how to love your wives, husbands. Christ’s love was a laying down of His life for His bride. Do you lay down your pride, your time, your preferences, your harsh domineering, etc., for your wife? Do we see Christ in how you love her? God’s love wasn’t just words.

Summary (5:33)

- Christian marriage should preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He died to save His bride and works for her best.
- Do you need help? Seek it out! The imaging forth of the Gospel is at stake!

**From Heav’n He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her
And for her life He died.**

**“The Church’s One Foundation”
Samuel J. Stone, 1866**