

Christ in the Home

by Doc Greenway

Doc Greenway emphasizes the significance of a Spirit-filled life in establishing Christ-centered relationships within the home.

Duration: 56:58

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 5:22-33

Topics: "Home"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the latter part of the fifth chapter of the Bible, presenting a challenging pattern for living. The sermon emphasizes four rules of grammar, highlighting the verb 'filled' in the present tense and passive voice, indicating that one cannot fill themselves. The sermon then delves into the patterns of submission, affection, and union within the context of Christian marriage. The preacher emphasizes the importance of these relationships being under the control of Christ and expresses the significance of the husband and wife relationship as fundamental in the Christian testimony and life.

Transcript

First filling is equivalent to being baptized with the Holy Ghost. And when they were baptized, some wonderful things happened. You can read about it.

It's still there in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. I know some folks say, well, they just can't get tongues out of the Bible. No, of course, it's there to stay.

And whatever they may do with it, they can't alter the fact of it. It's just there, and you have to face up to the challenge of it. Not only tongues, of course, but prophecy and all these other wonderful gifts which God, by His Spirit, has provided for His church.

I'm convinced that God has never yet removed any of His gifts from the church. But the church has removed herself from heavenly places where alone they can operate. And whenever God's people will press through into the heavenlies, they are touching the throne like.

And they're at the source of power. And the blessed Spirit of God is there to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ. It is against the background of a Spirit-filled life that we can alone expect to live victoriously.

I think I ought to emphasize this too, before I leave this point. There are four rules of grammar that apply to this verb filled. We've had this in B.D.C. several times, but B.D.C. students will just bear with me, I'm sure.

Four rules of grammar. First of all, the verb filled is in the present tense. That means it's a continuing thing.

Then it is in the passive voice. You can't fill yourself. The subject is being acted upon.

And may the Lord help us to see that. We are living in days when people are being persuaded that all they've got to do is to kneel down and begin to speak in the heavenly language. And if they don't get on with the job, well someone will get alongside them and say a few words and say, now you copy me.

You say these words after me, and in that way you'll come into freedom. What a lot of rubbish that is. Passive voice.

You can't fill yourself. No one else can fill you but the Spirit of God alone. And I would rather see people waiting 10 or 20 years and being really filled with the Spirit than having a psychological experience or an emotional stirring which will never stand the test and the strain of life as we know it.

Look here, I know what I'm talking about. I've had people in the vestry here in days gone by, and yes some even within the last few months, who have gone through this very thing. They were told certain things.

They were told that this was the modern technique. Oh praise God the Holy Spirit has his own technique. And you can't organize the Holy Ghost.

Passive voice. It's in the plural number. It means everybody, without a single exception.

No one is excluded. We are all able to lay a hold upon this glorious promise. And it is in the imperative mood, it's a command.

You don't argue about it. You don't reason concerning it. You don't try to work it out.

You simply obey it. Be filled with the Spirit. And I'm sure tonight that if we have a vision of what God wants to do in this glorious Spirit-filled life, we will understand that it enters into every single detail of our life.

There is nothing excluded. Everything we do, we say, we are, every single thing is included in this Spirit-filled life. Into every minute thing.

And into all life's relationships. For the Spirit of God would reign and rule and control in every single thing that applies to the people of God. Do you believe that? Praise God it's true.

Wonderfully true. And when we think true in terms of the Spirit-filled life, we are thinking not just in terms of blessing, in terms of speaking with tongues. Although I wish I could say with Paul, I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all.

When God baptised me with the Holy Ghost, I spoke with tongues all right, for about two or three hours at least. And it was a wonderful experience. But we're not talking only of that.

When we think in terms of a Spirit-filled life, we are thinking in terms of a sin-exposing life, a Christ-exalting life, a Lord-enthroning life, a self-effacing life, with all the Spirit of God would do in us as He lives out His own pure life through us. For His one absorbing, controlling passion is to exalt and glorify and uplift the Christ of God. And if He can get His people to the place where they work and live and think in harmony with Him, then that is what He will do in us and through us to His praise and His glory.

So it is against the background, then, of this Spirit-filled life that the Apostle Paul speaks concerning life's relationships and gives us that glorious theme of Christ in the home. I wish I had more time to talk about the Spirit-filled life, but it's not much use talking about it if we don't experience it, is it? The best thing is to enter in upon it. But now to come to the verses which are before us tonight, and as I said they're very important verses and often they're just skipped over.

Christ in the home. Christianity is the most practical of all religions. Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, is not just a remote influence.

He is a living person. He is not detached from life's relationships, but He enters into them. He enters intimately and personally and minutely by and through the eternal Spirit.

For it is the Holy Spirit who is the active agent in this dispensation. And I don't know of any human association into which the Spirit of God will not enter where the Christian is concerned. He deigns to dwell with us, and thank God He desires to control us even in the sphere of our home life.

The theme of this passage, and indeed right over into the sixth chapter, is, as I've said, Christ being lived out in the home of the Spirit-filled believer by and through the ministry of the Holy Ghost. And this is a subject that is very dear to the heart of Paul. He talks about it again in the Colossian letter, and enlarges upon it.

Now what is the Christian's home? Well there are many definitions of home, the place where we are treated the best and grumbled the most. That's one definition and I suppose it's true. The one I like is it's the place where the small are great and the great are small.

For in the home everyone somehow seems to find a level of equality. But what is it to the Christian? The Christian's home is the church in miniature. The Christian's home is the house of God in reflection.

This is Paul's contention. And I'm sure it has good grounds. If the Christian's home is a replica of the house of God, then in that home there will be one voice heard to speak with real authority, and that will be the voice of the Lord.

There will be one place, one experience, one sphere of life, expressed by and through the Christian home where one will is known to dominate, and that will be the will of the Lord. It will be a place where one force is known to control, and that force will be the love of the Lord, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And when Paul has written these words, they're against the background of being filled with the Spirit, and also in the light of what he has said concerning submissiveness, yielding spontaneously and naturally one to another as fellow Christians.

And what he does now is to bring into prominence three relationships within the home life. And he shows how those relations are to be under the control of Christ, expressed through the Spirit. You know that the three relations are the husband and wife, the children and parents, and the masters and servants.

And the husbands and wives, they are mentioned first, because this relationship is fundamental and basic in the social structure of our Christian testimony, and of the life that we lead. Now these relationships, we're going to talk about, first of all, the verses in this fifth chapter, and leave the rest for some other time, but they present to us in the latter part of this chapter a challenging pattern for living. Let us get down to some detail.

First, you have a pattern here of submission, that is verses 22 to 24. Then there is a pattern of affection, that is verses 25 to 29. Then a pattern of union, verses 30 to 33.

A pattern of submission on the part of the wife. A pattern of affection on the part of the husband. And a pattern of union in its concept of what the church is, and how that church is expressed through the home in miniature, as a replica of the purpose and the pattern of God.

A pattern of submission, verses 22 to 24. Now, as I said, in these verses, the Christian wife is presented to us. And we should remember, it is a Christian wife filled with the Holy Spirit, in her relation to her husband, who is filled with the Holy Spirit.

That's the context. The application is to Christians, and the ideal in married life is presented to us in these verses. What is involved in this pattern of submission? Well, I would say, first of all, a sense of personal loyalty, which the wife has.

That's verse 22. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. Submit, *hupotasso*, is a military term used of soldiers under a commanding officer.

But notice, unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. Those words are important. As unto the Lord is *hos*, in the Greek text, and that means exactly as unto the Lord.

What is Paul saying? Personal loyalty, on the part of the wife, is primarily to Jesus Christ, as absolute and supreme Lord. And to her husband, only in harmony and in the light of the will of Christ, who is absolute Lord. Now, this is very important.

The husband is not absolute Lord and master of his wife. There is only one supreme Lord. His name is Jesus.

And in my counselling throughout the years, I have known many a dear Christian wife, heartbroken, downhearted, depressed, despondent and defeated, because of this very thing which has not been understood. And I know that a so-called Christian husband can exert himself and assert his authority right out of context. And a wife, because she doesn't understand that her first allegiance is to Jesus Christ, often finds her own conscience is disturbed and her own mind is confused on the issues that do arise in any marriage.

That is why it's important. This attitude towards Jesus Christ as absolute Lord, must condition everything. And the question of conscience can only be settled and satisfied in relation to Jesus Christ as the supreme master.

No Christian wife is expected to violate the claims of her awakened conscience for the sake of satisfying the whims of her carnally-minded husband. And I want this point to be absolutely clear. God does not intend that any woman married to any man should be so under domination and so under terrible control that her conscience is offended in relation to Christ, who died for her sake, and who lives to keep her, and who must have, at all times, the first claims upon her personal loyalty.

The submission she exhibits toward her husband is simply a recognition of the headship of Christ. But if the kind of submission she is expected to reveal goes contrary to the claims of the headship of Christ, then her conscience is offended, and her spiritual life suffers in consequence. How important this is.

And when I think of the disturbances and the disruptions in home life in this country of New Zealand, I've got to the place where people visit me, I'm almost afraid to ask them any questions about their personal home life, because of the upset that I find so often. And I'm sure that much of it is due to this. Submission is not slavery.

It is liberty in the light of Christ's claims upon a Christian woman. And when she recognizes those claims, then she can hand her whole life over to his control. And in that way, having that vision, and having that sense of supreme loyalty to Christ, then she can adjust her life, then she can adapt herself to any other claims that are made upon her.

But God never intends that a woman's conscience should ever be disturbed. A Christian woman, I mean a spirit-filled woman, should ever be disturbed in the realm of conscience, because she feels she is so much under obligation to the man who is her husband, that she must do at all costs what she is told to do, even though her conscience rebels against it, because she knows it is contrary to the claims of Christ. Oh, may God save his dear handmaidens from such a terrible plight.

And God knows there's a lot of it going on. I remember a Christian woman in my home assembly in Skewen, in Wales, a lovely Christian, spirit-filled, going on with the Lord. But in her unconverted days, of course, she had married an unconverted man.

And this unconverted man was a terrible character, a drunkard, profligate. He was everything that was bad. And he would insist on trying to compel her to do certain things which he knew were wrong in the sight of God.

And she refused. And not once but many times we've seen her come to the meeting, her poor face all bruised, her eyes blackened, her lips swollen so that she could hardly praise the Lord. But she made her stand for Jesus Christ.

And she was determined that she would not offend the Lord who had bought her. And I remember the night when her husband came looking for her, for her, drunk, drunken as he was. And we all began to pray.

And I saw that man come down the aisle to find his wife. He had beaten her up that day. And you know what happened? She rose and put her arms around his neck and he put his arms around her.

And they both got down on their knees and she led him to Christ. What a wonderful moment that was. But here in the realm of so-called Christian living, we have to be so careful lest we should have a wrong view, a wrong vision of what is really expected.

Supreme loyalty, personal loyalty, is primarily to Jesus Christ. And that must condition everything else. If it doesn't, it's out of perspective and it never really works out.

Then in this pattern of submissiveness or submission, there is involved a spiritual insight. That's verse 23. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.

And he is the savior of the body. Now without this spiritual insight, which sees the principle of Christ's headship at work, then the attitude of the wife is bound to be affected. This means to say, listen, I want you to get this, it's important.

This means to say that the true basis of married life is spiritual. Is that clear? It's spiritual. The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.

He is the savior of the body. The wife then who yields submission does so on a spiritual basis, in a spiritual context. For she has a spiritual insight into Christ's supreme headship.

And seeing that, she understands why it is she should give, she should yield submission to her spirit-filled husband. In the latter clause here, where we read, he is the savior of the body. This applies to Christ only.

The husband is not the savior of the body. There's only one savior, and his name is Jesus. But the idea is this.

There's a pattern here. Christ is the head of his church. He loves his members.

He cares for them. He keeps them, see if guards them, protects them, cherishes them. The Christian wife, filled with the spirit, who sees that vision, understands her relationship to her spirit-filled husband in the light of that which is intensely spiritual.

And that is the true basis of any happy Christian married life. To be the savior of the world, Jesus died. To be the savior of the body, Jesus lives.

And his life fills his members. Now you may ask, in what sense is there a saviorhood of the body? For we read it here, he is the savior of the body. But in this sense, the head is in control.

That vital control which he exercises is intended to be an expression of his own life in the members of his church. For the head is the source of direction. The head is the source of perception.

The head is the source of expression. And Christ, in absolute control of his church as living head, reveals his life through his members. In that way, he is the savior of the body.

So, the attitude of the Christian wife is based on this spiritual insight to Christ's supreme headship. And therefore, when she lives in union with her husband, they both have a sense of glorious relationship to Jesus Christ as their personal head. And it is in him that they merge.

In him they are united. In him they find the basis of harmony. And they won't find it anywhere else.

I remember a dear lady in Christ's church when I stayed there once telling us about the time when her husband spoke in one of the assembly meetings and said, I want you to know that I'm the head of my house and the head of my wife. And she does whatever I say. And she does nothing else except what I tell her.

And his wife was sitting there. So she said, right. And when she got home, she didn't say very much.

But it seemed that the next day, the baker came to the door and said, how much bread do you want today? And she said, Robert, how much bread do you want today? What do you mean? He said, it's nothing to do with me. Oh, yes it is, she said. You are the head of the house.

Well, he said, I don't know, woman, what are you talking about? Oh, well, she said, you just look after things. She says, I'm going off to the park with my Bible to have a good time with the Lord. You're in control.

The butcher came and the grocer. And so it went on all day. And she had a wonderful time out there in the park with her Bible, having a glorious time of fellowship with the Lord.

When she came home late that night, it was to a very dejected husband. And he apologized to her for the things that he had said without thought, without due consideration. And you know, it is really true, isn't it? Unless we have the spiritual concept of Christ in control of both lives, how can there be a merging? How can there be that unity of heart and mind and purpose and desire and will? This is the spiritual insight which the Christian wife must have if she is to have a happy married life.

Then there's a practical concept in verse 24. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in everything. The word therefore has the force of but.

But as the church is subject unto Christ. Although it is Christ and not the Christian husband who is the savior of the body, the question of obedience still arises. Now we are coming to the balance in all this, aren't we? We must state the positive side, and then we see how the scripture enables us to interpret it.

How is the wife to exhibit obedience? As the church is subject unto Christ, we are told, reminding us once more of the spiritual basis of the marriage relationship. But if we ask, how is the church subject to Christ? What is the answer? Surely the first application is spiritual. How are we subject to Christ? Is it merely something that is material? No, it's a spiritual relationship.

And this interprets the remainder of the verse in everything, in every single thing which involves the married relationship. How is the wife to submit to her husband? As the church is subject to Christ. Will Christ demand of us anything which is wrong? Never in all this world.

Will Christ insist that we obey him? Will his commands be selfish? Will his demands be unthinking, unsympathetic, unkind? Never, never, never could we think that of our precious Lord. And this, we are told, is how the wife is to be subject to her husband, as the church is subject to Jesus Christ, in that spiritual relationship which brings from him a control which is understanding and sympathetic and loving and at all times considerate. What a vision, isn't it? What an ideal, what a pattern.

And if we as Christians can keep that concept of the headship of Christ before us at all times, then there are no difficulties that could ever be presented. So this is the wife's position, obedience and submission to her Spirit-filled husband, not against the pleadings of her conscience, but in the light of the fact it is as unto the Lord who is the supreme Lord and Master. She yields submission because she has an insight to the headship of Christ.

She yields submission even as the members of the body of Christ give obedience to their living head, who will never demand of them anything which is not right. And this surely presents a tremendous challenge to each one of us. Now where does the husband come in? Well he doesn't get off scot-free.

Look at the pattern of affection here, verses 25 to 29. It is the husband's God-directed privilege to love his Christian wife. And observe the standard of the pattern in verse 25.

Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. When I've met husbands who have come to me and said that their wife should do this, that, and the other thing, I've always asked them, well, how do you love your wife? Has Christ loved the church? Is that your standard? What kind of love is this? This is the strong love word, agapau. This is the love that prizes.

And listen, every expression of natural affection which the Christian husband has toward his wife must be, should be, ought to be at all times impregnated by the divine love of God. For this is what is intended here, as Christ loved the church. We skim over those words, don't we? And we just listen to them.

What do they convey to us? This is the love that God revealed at Calvary. This is the love which God is. This is the love which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

This is the love which the Spirit of God produces in us as a fruit of the Spirit. This is the love wherewith a man should love his wife if he's a Christian. And this is the only standard that I can see in God's precious word.

For God will not and cannot endorse that which is selfish. He will never do that. Now notice, even as Christ also loved the church, here's the high parallel of affection.

Even as. And notice too, it is a present tense love, a continuing love. Not just something which is expressed as an occasional outburst of affection, if you like, but a continuing thing.

Right throughout every expression of human affection which a man has for his wife, if he is filled with the Spirit, this deep, sweet, pure, abiding love of God, the love which Christ had for his church, permeates it, pervades it, and lifts it out of any solid atmosphere into a place where it is pure and clean and lovely and wholesome as God intended. And my friends, I would to God tonight, that all the Christians in Hamilton could listen to that. For I tell you it's important, it lies at the very basis, at the bedrock, not only of our natural life, but of our spiritual life in so many instances.

And listen, and give himself for it. Give himself over on her behalf as the church. He didn't give himself up to death for a sinful world, just in order to claim the church as a possession.

For that, it seems to me, would have been selfish. When you read, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, it does not present a picture of Christ seeing a church, and therefore going all out in death if need be, in order to claim that church for his own, as a selfish thing. Who for the joy, who instead of the joy set before him in heaven, because he was utterly selfless, endured the cross, despising the shame.

When Christ gave himself over on the behalf of the church, it was not done selfishly, but because he loved the church, because he loved you, and he loved me. And this is the pattern. For if a man will love his wife as Christ loved the church, then in the lesser sense, not in the vicarious sense at all, but surely with all this meaning behind it, he will give himself for her sake.

And will not be selfish. Thank God tonight, we do know that the love of Christ is sacrificial, and substantial, and unselfish. And if every Christian husband could pattern his love on that, what a wonderful home life it would be, and what a wonderful church life it would be.

Christ loved the church utterly, unreservedly, spontaneously, sacrificially, continually. And so should a Christian man love his wife, not as an act of passionate desire, but as an expression of constant consideration. This is the standard.

And if as during the civil war in America, when the standard was taken so far ahead of the troops, and the commanding officer cried, bring back the standard of the men, and the standard bearer cried out, bring the men up to the standard, and this is God's standard. And he expected every Christian man should reach

that standard, for thank God the spirit-filled life enters into this surely, as into everything else. I was reading some days ago about Herbert Spencer, the philosopher, when he wanted to find out whether or not he should marry a certain young girl, and he just flicked the coin up, heads I do and tails I don't, and it came down tails, and so he took it that it wasn't right for him to.

Imagine a man adopting an attitude like that on one of the most sacred relationships of human life and experience. God has opened our eyes, and I believe has opened our hearts to the truth of his word. There is something about this relationship, which as we shall see, God says through Paul, is a mystery.

But the mystery in that conjugal relationship between the husband and wife is simply the expression of the intimacy and the affection and the love and the compassion which Christ has for you and for me. And if we fail at this point, we are failing to express that most wonderful of all spiritual relationships. Then what is the sanctity of the pattern, verses 26 and 27.

The great object which Christ had evidently in loving the church, up to the point of dying for her sake, was for the sanctification and cleansing of that church. Listen to verse 26. That he might sanctify and cleanse it with a washing of water by the word.

Sanctify means to set apart from a secular or physical use to a sacred use. And that surely is a sacramental thing. I believe that marriage in the sight of God does contain the sacramental element.

From his standpoint, it is there. For anything in the marriage relationship which interferes with this principle of sanctity, is not born of the Spirit of God. It cannot be.

In the true Christian's life, the strongest bond between a man and his wife is not physical, it is spiritual. And arising out of that spiritual relationship will be the physical expression which will be blessed and honored and sanctified before the living Christ. To understand this, is to preserve the sanctity of marriage in a world which is fast losing its moral standards.

That he might sanctify, set apart the church and cleanse it how? With a washing of water by the word. And again observe the sanctity of this pattern. As Christ is continually cleansing and washing the members of his body through the instrumentality of the written word of God, so let the husband and wife study that word together.

And then they will find that God through that word will sanctify and cleanse them both. Let them get on their knees and pray together. And as they do that, the sense of God's presence will so fill their hearts.

He will keep them clean and wholesome and pure in his sight. If we fail to appreciate the influence of these precious things that God has given to us, then we are failing at a point which I believe is so detrimental to the spiritual life of so many, that they simply fall back into that which has become tainted and sordid and perverted, instead of that which has to be expressed in purity and beauty and sanctity and chastity and holiness in the presence of God. Do you think this standard is too high? It's God's standard.

And if we don't see this and if we don't accept it, then you can talk about the spirit-filled life as much as you like, but you're not bringing it into that sacred relationship where it should be brought. And the result is that you're failing at that point in your life where the devil can get in so quickly as the accuser of the brethren and disturb and distress you and bring you into a place of defeat. I dealt recently with a domestic problem and I said to the man who was speaking to me, well, do you ever have any reading together from God's Word, ever have any times of prayer together? Oh, he said, I couldn't think of doing that.

I couldn't think of reading with my wife. I'd be too, I'd feel too ashamed, he said. Well, I said, I can't understand it.

Pray with her, he said, I couldn't open my mouth. Well, I said, and you call yourself a Christian? I don't care what kind of furniture you have in your home, but don't forget the family altar. It's the most important piece of all for Christians.

Do you have that family altar? Do you read his Word together? Do you go into his presence together? Do you lift your hearts together before him? Or are you just living an isolated sort of life? Ah, this is at the bedrock of our relationship in the marriage sphere. And I say to you tonight with all my heart that as Christ cleanses and sanctifies and keeps his members clean by using the instrumentality of his Word, the same means are at our disposal together. And isn't it a lovely thing that God condescends to give us the same means of preserving within the context where it should be preserved, that which in God's sight is pure and lovely and holy, but in the world's sight is so often a cause for jesting and for worse things.

And unfortunately, the same attitude creeps in to many a Christian heart and life and mind. Listen to verse 27, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. That's his aim and object for his church.

He loves the church so intimately, so warmly, so intensely. He won't permit even the friend of the bridegroom to present his bride to him. No, he possesses her for himself.

This is the Lord's intention, that a glorious church, all glorious within, should result from his own affection for her. Christ is both the Redeemer of the church, because he died for her sake, and the bridegroom of the church, because she is the object of his affection. And then, having stated the positive side of this presentation, a glorious church, Paul states the negative side, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, with nothing to mar her moral and spiritual beauty.

So deeply does he love his church, that it should be holy, *hagia*, separated from evil, without blemish, unblameable, free from any faultiness, like the sacrificial animal, which had to be without spot or blemish, so would he have his church to be. And this sanctity of affection is set forth. The emphasis is placed on the cleansing efficacy of the precious Word of God.

And I would say tonight, again, that within this hallowed place where we meet with the living Christ, we ought to be able to take with us into our homes the same blessed and holy atmosphere, the same sense of achievement and attainment, as together we meet around that precious written Word. The same sense of hallowed sanctity, as together we lift up our hearts in his presence and worship the Lord together. This is God's pattern.

This is God's purpose. And then what is the substance of the pattern in verses 28 and 29? Verse 28, so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself.

This word *as*, again, has the same strength, *host*, exactly as a man regards his own body. He is to do this as Christ loves the church, which is his own body. For it is in this sense that we apply the words of the text.

He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. They are so joined together that by Christ and his church, they become synonymous terms. Christ and his church are synonymous.

In 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 12, you have it there. For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is Christ. Not so also is the body of Christ, but so also is Christ.

Christ and his body, so intimately joined, they become one. This, said Paul, this is the substance of the pattern that the husband should regard as his sacred obligation. In verse 29, Paul gives the reason for his contention.

For no man ever yet hateth his own flesh, that is his own body, that would be unnatural. And so with a Christian husband and his Christian wife, any trace of hatred is totally unnatural. What does Christ do for his church, his body? He nourisheth and cherisheth it even as the Lord the church.

Even as. Maintaining the same holy pattern, the aim of Christ is to nourish and to cherish the church, to see to its welfare, to look to its protection and its comfort. This, said Paul, is how a man should love his wife.

This is the substance of the divine pattern, an affection that is careful, protective and always considerate. As the church is infinitely precious to Christ, so the spirit-filled husband regards his God-given partner with the same preciousness. For there is to be a perfect identification in aims and desires and ambitions and longings, and it is the Spirit of God that can bring this about in the heart and life of a man and a woman.

Now finally and briefly, a pattern of union, verses 30 to 33. Notice how carefully and positively Paul keeps the spiritual to the forefront in speaking of the marriage union. In verse 30 you have the basis of this union.

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. The order of the Greek text is, because members we are of his body. Christ cares for and protects his people because they are members in particular, and he is very particular about his members, set according to his purpose.

So the basis of this union is intensely spiritual. The vital membership we have in the body of Christ, that's the principle upon which a husband should operate. The criterion of conduct then for a Christian husband, the test of all actions is whether or not what he does, what he desires, what he expects, is in complete harmony with the dictates and desires and expectations of Jesus Christ as the head of the body.

You won't get a home that is spiritual apart from that. Now, the beauty of a home is order, and it's God's order. The blessing of the home is contentment, is the contentment which the Spirit of God brings.

The glory of the home is hospitality. And I believe that the crown of the home is godliness, and that the fragrance of the home is love. You've been into homes and so have I where you can sense that love which is in evidence, one for the other.

It permeates, it pervades, it penetrates everything. And you know it's like a benediction going into a home like that. This is God's pattern, this is God's purpose.

The bond of union, that's verses 31 and 32. For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they too shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Here you reach the most sacred of human relationships, that conjugal union of husband and wife, which typifies the mysterious union of Christ and his members. This mystery is great, said Paul, far beyond the

concept of the carnal mind, far beyond the understanding of the natural man, but thank God not beyond the understanding of the spirit-filled man and the spirit-filled woman. For if we are living as God intends, we know that we have an allegiance to him first of all, that there is an area of life into which no one else can ever uproot.

It's something sacred between us and him as individuals. This is the mystery, said Paul, and it expresses what Christ is to his members. If the house and the home is the church in miniature, a reflection of the house of God, then Christ and his church, and the demands of Christ, and not the demands of human passion, will be the basic principle governing and controlling all the relationships of husband and wife as they live before the Lord.

You can call this the sublimation of love, if you like. But believe me, the whole concept of the marriage bond enters into its true environment when we lift it out of the natural and into the spiritual, where it becomes something which is holy and sacred and beautiful before the Lord. May God help us to keep it in that context.

In the last verse of this chapter, Paul speaks of the balance of union. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife, even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband. He gathers the whole thing up into one, and he says, now this is it.

The wife has her part to play, the husband has his part to play, but neither of them can play their part until they are joined in him. And you get out of that relationship and nothing will ever go right. With Christ in the home, occupying his rightful place, husband and wife will have no real difficulty in adjusting themselves to the demands or the claims made upon them, for both will want to do the will of God.

And that is the sweetest thing in the world. Affection is spontaneous on the husband's part, then. Submission is spontaneous on the wife's part.

But only because the first and final consideration is, Lord, what will thou have me to do? What happy homes there would be in New Zealand tonight, if this were the basis. What a wonderful country it would be, what a wonderful church it would be, if this were the foundation upon which we build. I'm sure you will agree with me that these verses we have studied have tremendous importance for us as men and women as we journey through life, but never lose sight of the spiritual context of it all.

The Spirit-filled life is the background, and that Spirit-filled life coming into life's most sacred relationships, in all the details, the minute details that are involved, and to have the sweet and blessed consciousness that into those things the Holy Spirit will enter in all his fullness and bring his purpose to pass, if we are prepared to allow him to have his right of way. God grant them that we may, as Spirit-filled believers, conform to this pattern in submission, in affection, in union, until Jesus comes, until we see our blessed bridegroom face to face. What a wonderful moment that's going to be.

O happy home, where thou art loved the dearest, thou loving friend and savior of our race, and where among the guests there never cometh one who can hold such high and honored place. O happy home, where thou art not forgotten when joy is overflowing, full and free. O happy home, where every wounded spirit is brought physician, comforter to thee.

O happy home indeed, where Christ is the head of the house, and where wife and husband are joined together in him, where his love, his life, his joy, his peace flow in abundance. That is God's pattern. May

we be conformed to it.

Amen.

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