

Ephesians 5:22f

1. We looked at the “one another” passages at our last lesson and saw that mutuality seems to be the overwhelming meaning of this construction. This of course sets up the tension of “being subject” to mutuality. Let’s look at the construction of the next section because the structure seems very deliberate.
 - Being subject (part) to each other in the fear of Christ
 - The wives (be subject to) one’s own husband as to the Lord
 - For husband is (ind.) head of his wife
 - As even the Christ (is) head of his church
 - he, savior of his body
 - but as the church is (ind) subject to the Christ
 - Thus even the wife (is subject) to the husband in all things.
2. If you set up that first paragraph in this way the structure of the paragraph is pretty obvious.
 - a. Structures like this are pretty common throughout scripture and they are intended to highlight that which is central to the thought of the section.
 - b. Remember what we talked about in the previous lesson. The household in the Roman empire as well as in the Hellenistic world was autocratic with the man at the top with near complete control. The man in the home had the power of life and death over the community of the family. How does the gospel change this?
 - c. The center of this construction is the phrase that is most ignored in this passage. “He, the savior of his body”. Who is “he”?
 - d. Paul in verse 31 will remind his readers (as Jesus did) that husband and wife are one flesh. The wife and the husband are one body.
 - e. In an autocratic society those beneath lay down their lives to preserve those above. How does the gospel change this?
 - f. It is interesting that the whole section is structures so that it never directly tells the wife to be subject to the husband. The verb is implied never explicit in this highly structured section. Also the tenses with the exception of the first participle which seems to have an imperative nature, are all indicatives.
 - The husbands, love (agape, imp) your wives as the Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her
 - (hina + subj) in order to make her holy cleansing by washing of water in word
 - (hina + subj) in order to present the church to himself glorious without spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind
 - (alla hina + subj) even in order to be holy and blameless
 - Thus the husband owes (ind) love (agape, inf) to his wife as to his own body.
 - he who loves his own wife loves himself
 - for no one hates his own flesh but nourishes it and tenderly cares for it
 - just as the Christ (nourishes and tenderly cares for) the church because we are members of the body

- For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and become the two into one flesh.
 - This secret is great: I say in Christ and in the church
 - each of you however should love (imp) his wife as himself
 - the wife (hina + subj) in order to fear the husband.
3. Paul is applying the gospel the Roman household beginning with the relationship between the husband and wife.
- a. The indicative is obvious. The husband is the head. In Roman society he is the representative, the one who speaks for and decides for the wife and all the household. Paul isn't commanding this here, he is simply stating the case. When we comes to slaves this will also be the indicative. To take from this that Paul is commanding that the man be the "head" is like commanding that the man be the master of our household slaves. This passage doesn't tell us to make a woman subservient anymore than it tells us to go get a slave. He is addressing the Roman household and applying the gospel to it.
 - b. What is the gospel? That he who had all power loved the other and became a servant for their deliverance from the fall. It is clear that Paul intertwines the language throughout this passage so that the men would get the message.
 - i. Bear in mind here that men also had the formal authority to determine the household religion.
 - ii. Also remember that the language of "love" is not romantic but servile. Servants (and vassals) are commanded to "love" their masters. Jesus was "the servant of all" so now in Christ the husband is the servant of the household.
 - c. This gets reinforced in the third section. The man "owes" love to his wife. He is in debt to her. Again this is classic Pauline gospel application language. Paul applies the Genesis story to it as did Jesus as we saw above. The image of the woman as property is banished. The man and woman are one body just as Christ and the church are one body.
 - d. Just in case anyone missed the message in the last section Paul re-uses certain key words from the rest of the epistle.
 - i. The secret (mysterion), this is the gospel, the secret of God's loving plan revealed in Christ.
 - ii. "In Christ". In this section it has been "the Christ" when Paul is referring clearly to Jesus and his work in his life and on the cross "giving himself up for" but here Paul changes back to the language he's been using throughout the book of being "in Christ". The household "in Christ" functions as all does "in Christ".
 - iii. The last section is strange to us but fits where the wife "fears" the husband. This echoes the "fear" in 5:21 and then in 6:5. This is an echo of "the fear of the Lord" which is not scary emotions but reverence and awe. In Christ this is a result a response of gratitude for the sacrificial generosity poured out on behalf of the beloved. Again, this energizes the Christian life and Paul wishes this to energize the Christian household. The wife is to be so astounded at the sacrificial love shown by the husband to her (and the master to the slave) that gratitude and love (and reciprocal service as well) flow towards the husband and the master.