

body. By strictest interpretation, the last phrase applies in the text primarily to Christ, who is “the deliverer and defender of the Church which is His body.” Surely the husband cannot be the savior of his wife in redemptive terms, but he can be her protector and provider. Any sacrifice and self-giving that create a sense of well-being and security will normally evoke free and loving submission from his wife. Martin concludes, “The husband must find the pattern of his conduct in conduct of Christ towards His Church.” ¹

Verse 24 repeats the responsibility of the **wives** to be subject **to their own husbands**, just as **the Church is subject unto Christ**. The little phrase **in everything** might be offensive to modern woman with her far-reaching freedom in society. ¹

The priority of the woman is in discussion all over the world, and also much in the Church-world. I believe the Bible teaches the woman has this chain of priorities: (1) God first; (2) her immediate family second; then (3) her responsibilities of a career or an outside-the-home job. In this light, we can see that anything which takes her away from her obeying the Word of God and His commands, will be her gauge whether or not she should obey her husband in everything. For example, if her husband tells her she is to rob, kill, or

1. Beacon Bible Commentary, Volume 9, pp. 240,241.

The modern mind sometimes finds this approach to social relations offensive, since unbridled freedom is the god par excellence for man today. In v. 21 the participle translated **submitting yourselves** (*hupotassomenoi*) is in the present middle voice and so leaves a degree of choice. W. O. Carver has observed the subjection is to be “voluntary, personal, and having full ethical value for the one who subjects himself and for others whom he serves in spiritual surrender.”

The second principle is that in each set of relationships “the obligation is based on the connection of the believer with Christ (5:22; 6:1, 5).” It is being “in the Lord” that commits one to this kind of living. This submission to one another is not the same level of commitment as one must make to the Lord. The degree of subordination required in these areas is determined to one’s obedience and submission to Christ. Paul believes that if the graces of the Lord flourish in the Christian Church they most certainly ought to be expected to prosper in the closely knit life of the individual family. ¹

A. Husbands-Wives, 5:22-33

Paul starts with the highest of the familial relationships, that of the husband and wife. The other two sets of relations are of lesser importance. The parent-child relationship is a product of the love

1. Beacon Bible Commentary, Volume 9, pp. 238,239

between a man and a woman, whereas the master-slave relationship is part of the attempt of a man to provide economically for his family. Notwithstanding, both of these social interdependencies bear profound significance in being a Christian in this “first great frontier of human existence.” The starting point for the cessation (ending) of strife is a holy bond between husband and wife. ¹

1. *The Submission of wives* (5:22-24)

Every personal relationship has some element of submission in it. In the natural order of things the husband occupies a position of priority. Paul fully recognizes this in calling wives to **submit yourselves** (22; cf. I Cor. 11:2-16; Col. 3:18). Unrelated martially, male and female by creation are equal, but in the family setting the husband must assume certain divinely ordained prerogatives and the wife must gladly accept this relationship. Bruce writes that it is not that “wives are inferior to their husbands, either naturally or spiritually. But Paul recognizes a divinely ordained hierarchy in the order of creation, and in this order the wife has a place next to her husband.” Wives must be willing to surrender to their husbands in order that the husband may exercise the authority which is his responsibility. Many modern marriages have been wrecked because wives have been unwilling to recognize

this fact as it relates to the husband’s labor, location of the home, and discipline of children. This deference (respect) by the wife is done **as unto the Lord**, that is, as part of her duty to the Lord. It is assumed that Paul speaks here in terms of Christian families, where this kind of submission should be feasible and possible. ¹

To bring this appeal within the frame of reference of this letter, Paul introduces the analogy of the headship of Christ as reinforcement of his assertion (claim) that wives should submit to their husbands (23; cf. 1:22). In I Cor. 11:3, Paul wrote, “I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” (RSV). In this “ascending (climbing) chain of relationship” two important ideas are evident. (1) Headship “denotes primarily controlling authority and the right to obedience.” (2) Control and obedience take place “within a living organism where the two parts are complementary each to the other.” Unity lies at the base of all three relationships mentioned in the Corinthian note, and Paul sees the hope of united families in this understanding of the husband-wife relationship. ¹

Not only is the husband **the head of the wife**; he is also analogously (in likeness to) **the savior of the**

1. Beacon Bible Commentary, Volume 9, p.239.

1. Beacon Bible Commentary, Volume 9, p. 240.