

The Christian Husband (2): A Call to Care

Colossians 3:19

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I want us to read Ephesians 5:22-33 and also Colossians 3:19.

Ephesians 5:22-33: "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. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

Colossians 3:19: "Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them."

Let us pray. We come before You, Lord, one more time, asking that You would help us to hear the Word of God today. I pray that You would send Your Spirit to open the eyes of our understanding, our ears to grip our attentions, and to help us, Lord, to love Your law, to love Your word, to love Your truth. Help us, Father, we ask now in Jesus' name. Amen.

We have been looking at the doctrines of the Christian home and the Christian family for some time now, and we are nearing the end of the husband and wife relationship. We had two sermons that dealt with the wife's responsibility toward the husband, and we also have now a second sermon on the husband's responsibility to his wife. We have been considering this analogy in Ephesians 5, which presents to us the church as the wife and Christ as the head or as the husband who is head of His home, the church

as it were, of His wife, His body. This analogy is given to us in Scripture to help us understand, to help us know, and to bring out truths about the relationship between Christ and His church and how that is meant to play into our relationships as Christian husbands and as Christian wives.

If you thought that it was hard for the women to hear their responsibilities and duties toward their husbands, I encourage you to listen to the last time we addressed the men, which showed them as the responsible head. I would hope that you felt the weight of the responsibility of being as Christ to the church in your relationship at home. The calling of the husband as head of his home takes on a command of love that is uniquely displayed in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for His bride, the church, which is a love that the Bible says passes knowledge. Think about that for a moment. It is incumbent upon the men to love their wives with a love that is described in other places of Scripture that passes knowledge, the love of Christ.

So, you feel the weight of that, you feel the sense of almost the impossibility of doing such things, and I assure you, apart from the grace of Christ, it is impossible to love as Christ loved the church. It is important to live in light of that weight, to live in light of that, to show that we need God as husbands. We need God to help us. This is not something that we can do in our own strength. This is not something that we can do because we just wake up one day and say, "I'm going to do this." We need God's grace, we need His help, we need to be beseeching Him for that love so that we might show our wives that love where He has loved us.

The weight of this has been conveyed upon husbands not just in Camden Valley Baptist Church but throughout all the ages. Men have taken up this truth and have preached it in like manner. John Chrysostom, from about 480, 1600 years ago, said this, addressing his congregation regarding this text of Scripture in Ephesians 5: "You have heard how great submission, you have extolled and marveled at Paul, how like an admirable and spiritual man he welds together our whole life. You did well. But hear now what he also requires at your hands. For again, he employs the same example. You have seen the measure of obedience; hear also the measure of love. Would you have your wife obedient unto you, as the church is to Christ? Then take then yourselves the same provident care for her as Christ takes for the church. Yea, even if it shall be needful for you to give your life for her, yea, and to endure and undergo any suffering whatever, refuse it not. Though you should undergo all this, yet will you not, no, not even then have done anything like Christ. For you indeed are doing it for the one to whom you are already knit, but He for the one who turned her back on Him and hated Him. In the same way then, as He laid at His feet her who turned her back on Him, who hated, spurned, and disdained Him, not by

harming nor by violence nor by terror nor by anything else of the kind, but by His unwearied affection, so also do you behave yourself toward your wife.

Can you imagine sitting there 1,600 years ago, hearing the man who's called the golden-tongued preacher preaching such a sermon to husbands? God's truths are eternal; they're for us today as they were for the people 1,600 years ago and 2,000 years ago in the Apostles' time. It's important to realize that this responsibility will never leave the husbands. It is God-given, it is ingrained in the union that exists between the head and the body, and it's there for us to embrace, not to refuse to take on.

So we considered last week the nature of this headship. We considered the responsibilities of this headship, that just as Christ was a loving Savior to His body and His bride, so the husband is to be a loving Savior to his wife. He's to preserve her, to love her, and as Christ loved the church. But not only was he to be a loving Savior to her, he was also to be a sanctifier of the body, as Christ is a sanctifier of His bride. That means he should work with the interests of making her holy and beautifying her in godliness and in righteousness. He does that by leading her in the ways of truth and by speaking the Word of God.

But we fell short due to time, and we weren't able to address another aspect of the responsibilities of husbands, which I want to take up here this morning and then move on to Colossians and make a few points regarding that. So I want to turn our attention to Ephesians 5, and I want us to consider verse 28 and verse 29. It says, "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever yet hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church."

So we already saw the husband as a loving Savior and a sanctifier, but here the passage of Scripture teaches us that he also is to be one who is a nourisher and a cherisher of his wife, one who nourishes her, one who cherishes her. The word "nourish" means to take care of, and it has the idea of bringing up and nurturing so that a plant might come to maturity or that a baby might grow to maturity. But the idea is that there is an investment on the part of the husband in such a way as to build up and edify, to bring his wife to maturity and nurture her by taking care of her, by shepherding her, if I could use those terms.

So this word "nurture" has a lot to do even with the sanctifying part. If she's being nurtured to maturity, it indicates that she's also growing in maturity, which is growing in sanctification. And so it is connected and linked, but it also is distinct, and we'll touch on that in just a moment. So it contains the idea of feeding and providing for her needs in such a way

that she will grow and such a way that she'll mature.

But also, the husband's responsibility is not only to nourish her, but it also says in this text to cherish her. And the word "cherish" has the idea of giving and imparting warmth. That's the idea of the word. It means to impart warmth, we could say, to comfort her. It is not only his responsibility to provide for her, to mature her, but his responsibility is to comfort her. That is to come alongside her and to console her, to be her comforter, as it were.

And there are certain observations that we can draw from this passage of Scripture that I want us to look at before we move on. Firstly, this: that the word "nourishing" and "cherishing" ultimately have to do with the display of love. These are words that describe love. It's contrasted in verse 29 with the word "hated." Look what it says: "No one ever yet hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it," which means this is in contrast to hatred, which also implies that the failure to nourish and cherish a wife is a display of hatred to your wife, not a display of love.

Right, so this is how we display love: by nourishing and cherishing her. The absence of such would indicate that there is not that impartation of love which God has given us to do. And so we see that there's a contrast here between hatred and nourishing and cherishing, which means this is a matter of love.

Secondly, not only is nourishing and cherishing a matter of love, these terms in and of themselves have endearment intertwined in their meaning. Here you have nourishing, here you have cherishing. These are not just words of mere commitment that I'm committed to my wife. That's a nice thing, it's a good thing, that's what love also looks like, but it implies a tenderness in the way and manner in which you are committed to her. He says nourishing and cherishing, it's this nurturing of a baby to maturity, it's this nurturing and tenderness that how you handle a plant to feed it and see it grow up. And so it has tenderness, cherishing to impart warmth. This is very, very important because we're not just talking about the fact that I'm committed, I do my duties, and I'm done, but I'm not engaged in loving affection toward her. No, the text here is clear. These words are ingrained in these words are terms of endearment and terms of affection.

But thirdly, the other thing to note is that nourish and cherish are in the present continuous tense, which means this is not a matter of one day getting up or maybe on a Monday morning after a sermon like this and nourishing and cherishing her for about two hours and then leaving her to be. Just like a man tends to a plant or just like a baby, like my dear wife has been attending to Johanna, and you know, nonstop over the hours,

nourishing and cherishing him. So the work of a husband does not cease in nourishing his wife and cherishing his wife. He used to be committed to continue in this work. It's a continuing consistency about the manner in which he behaves toward his wife.

And finally, we have to also realize that these words are given in, once again, the context of the analogy between the head and the body. And Paul makes his argument, which we're just about to look at, and he's basically saying this: Listen, this is only common sense. This is the union, this is a necessary part of that union between the head and the body. This is not an optional part, this is a necessary part, meaning if you are head of your wife, therefore this is required of you. It's a necessary commitment to nourish and cherish her. And so this is part of that marital union.

And so, with all these in mind, we go on to see Paul's argument that he's making in this text. And look what he says there in verse 28: "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever yet hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church." And Paul's argument begins with a very, very natural approach. He says, consider nature, look at yourself, take your body as an example, take your body as an example. I want you to see the common sense aspect of how you should treat your wife. He says, how do you treat yourself? He basically brings it down to a very basic level of understanding that anyone can lay hold of, and he brings it down to a common sense level. He says no one hates his own body, no one hates his own flesh, okay? And he goes, well, how do you treat your body? This is part of his argument. And he says, okay, the way you treat your body, in the way you treat yourself, is the way you need to treat your wife.

I think Jesus uses this in the way we should treat our neighbors: Do unto others as you would like done unto yourself. Love your neighbor as yourself. This is a common sense application. It's not a matter of picking up the finest book on marriage and working out how to love my wife. If you read how you love yourself, you'll be filled with ideas on how to love your wife. Alright, it's very common sense. Paul's bringing out a common sense. As we all know, these things are helpful for us, but sometimes we just need to wake up and smell the roses, okay? It's right there before us, there in our own lives.

And so he's saying you need to realize and see how you care for yourself. Now, we all know this, that we go through extraordinary and go to extraordinary measures to care for ourselves, to nurture ourselves, to love ourselves. We do this emotionally. We soothe ourselves from our agitations. We may be feeling hot and agitated, put the air conditioning on to cool ourselves.

We may be feeling down and out and frustrated, so we call a friend and say, come over, let's have a good chat together. We may be a kind of, as we would naturally satisfy our cravings, we feel hungry, we feel like we want to watch something, see something, do something, entertain ourselves, whatever it is, and we just go out and do it without any real thought. We attend to our emotions.

But not only do we do this emotionally, we do this intellectually. We don't just not learn anything anymore once we, you know, when we go on in life. We're always looking to learn new things. You might say, well, I want to learn how to change the brakes on my car, and I want to be intellectually stimulated, so I'm going to pick up this book and read on this subject. And I want to grow in my understanding of this theological point, so I'm going to stimulate myself intellectually to study things, to learn new skills, to basically educate ourselves, to help ourselves to mature in knowledge. So we attend to ourselves emotionally, we attend to ourselves intellectually, we tend to ourselves physically. We wake up in the morning, look in the mirror, and say, "Oh, I'm not doing too well." We go to the specialist, and he says, "Your liver's not doing the best, Josh." I say, "Okay, what does that mean?" He says, "It means diet." So, I go on a diet, but I'm doing all that to nourish myself, to cherish myself, and to help myself be well-rounded, not only intellectually and emotionally but physically as well. We take walks, go out in the sun, cut our hair, cut our nails, have days of relaxation, enjoy good food, and wear nice clothing. We also help ourselves and cherish ourselves spiritually. We take time to read the Word of God, sing, pray, come to church, and fellowship with one another.

We see that it's important, and it is important, that we continue to progress in our growth in all these areas. We also see it's important to have ourselves comforted in all these areas. Now, these are just natural and fundamental things. Many of these things are natural and fundamental to humanity. In fact, so much so that if we saw someone who didn't cut their hair, cut their fingernails, or didn't learn anything, we would say, "This man is not all there; he is not right." Why? Because it's so natural for us as human beings to attend to our comforts and to attend to our growth and development.

Paul is basically saying the same thing. We give money, time, and effort to secure things for our own bodies so that we might feel satisfied and developed. He's saying, "Well, just look at how you treat yourself, and then realize this: your body is your wife." He says, "You do all this for yourself. It's utterly foolish to hate yourself. You nourish and cherish yourself, just as the Lord does the church. But realize this: your wife is your body. The husband is the head of the wife." It says later on in Ephesians 5:31 that they have been made one flesh. So, Paul is saying, "Just like you look after yourself, look after your wife. Your wife is your body."

What he's essentially saying is that the neglect of your body is utter and sheer madness. It's unnatural to hate yourself. It's unnatural not to care for yourself and for the needs of yourself. And he's saying, "If your wife is your body, it's equally foolish not to nourish and cherish her. It's equally foolish to ignore her, to not meet her emotional needs, intellectual needs, physical needs, and spiritual needs." He's simply saying this is self-destructive.

We are to support our wives emotionally. That means we need to listen to her, give her our ear, give her our time, let her pour out her heart to us. This is what he's saying: you listen to yourself, and you want people to listen to you, so listen to your wife. Give her time, give her your ears, give her your heart, and affirm your love for her.

As a husband, we should be concerned about keeping our wives intellectually stimulated, meaning we want to see them grow in their understanding and knowledge of not only life but of the Word of God, the truth of God, and an understanding of the things of God. It is so common in many relationships that they don't stimulate each other intellectually. I mean, how many theological discussions Natalie and I have had, heaven knows, but there have been a lot. I'm excited to talk to her about the things that I'm learning, and we try to share things. She comes up to me and says, "Hey, Josh, what do you think of this passage?" and whatever it may be, we're stimulating each other intellectually and spiritually.

You're trying to grow in knowledge. You're not just doing everything for her and not teaching her, like the car seat for Johanna. You know how to do that, but it gets difficult. But hey, you've got to make time to also do that. You meet your wife's intellectual needs, help her meet her intellectual needs, and keep her stimulated with sermons, books, articles, whatever it may be. As she's cooking or playing, she can listen to something that you have shared with her. You say, "Hun, listen to this sermon I listened to the other day. You'll be blessed by it," and whatever it may be.

Also, provide for her rest physically, and provide for her needs. That could be as simple as you come home, see your wife busy, take the children off her hands, give her some rest, give yourself rest, give her some rest, take the kids off her hands, give her some quiet time with the Lord, go for a walk, or whatever it may be. Whatever it may be, you give her that physical rest and care for her physical needs.

Now, all the things that I'm mentioning here take really three things: time, self-sacrifice, and also service. And these are the real three things that we battle with. We don't like to self-sacrifice, we don't like to serve people, we don't like to pick up the towel and do the dishes, and on top of that,

we don't like to give of our time. And being a good husband requires time, sacrifice, and service. Time may be to say, "Let's go out on a date together and go out for dinner," or "Let's go get a coffee together," "Let's go do something together," "Let's go for a walk together." This is taking time out of your busy schedule, and if you're too busy to give time to your wife, well then, you're too busy. You are the head of your body, and you need to nourish and cherish her just like the Lord does the church.

But also, there's a matter of sacrifice. That means you need to say no to good things for better things. You know, there are many good things in life, but we have to work through what are the better things at this time of our life. There are certain seasons in life where you must say no to good things because there are better things and more important things you need to attend to. I think Christians struggle with this the most because what ends up happening is we get saved, and we put away all those things that were just really frivolous in some respect, and we take up all spiritual things. For the most part, we're doing all for the glory of God, and we look at everything in life as having certain significance. And so then we say, because we're doing good things, then we think it's okay if I neglect my wife because it's good things, either things for the Lord or these are things for the church or there are things for this. What the Bible is helping us to understand here is that there are certain times we need to say no to good things for better things or more important things or more pressing things because they are things which need our attention. And that's part of the seasons of life and part of growing and nurturing and maturing our wives.

Also, serving her requires taking up the towel, helping her with whatever it may be. I've learned a new art of service, which is the changing of nappies, and it's quite a fine art, can be messy sometimes too. But that's part of taking up the towel in some respect and trying to help where you can. I'm not just saying these things; I fall very short of nourishing and cherishing and all these things, but I'm just here to give some practical ideas on ways in which this requires self-sacrifice and taking up the towel, as it were, and serving.

And so, Paul basically makes these arguments. He's saying, "Look, just consider the natural realm, then transfer that to your wife. Understand that she is your body." This is his argument. And then he goes on and builds the argument further and says, "Even as Christ nourishes and cherishes the church." Once again, this raises the stakes very high and presents to us the greatest of examples. And what he's simply trying to say to us is this: that Jesus did not just die to save the church. That was not the only thing that He's done for the church. It wasn't just that two thousand years ago, Jesus hung on a cross, He died, He purchased His bride, He saved her. Great, now the bride's on her own to fend for herself? No, He

nourishes continuously, He cherishes continuously His bride while we so-journ through this world. He hasn't left us; He's here with us to build us up to maturity, to comfort us in our sorrows and our heartaches, to hear our cries when we plead for the injustice that happens against us and we plead for the troubles of our own soul, to forgive us when we sin against His goodness.

You see, the Lord Jesus did not just leave His bride; He promised His bride, and He said to His bride, "I will be with you always, even unto the end of the age. I'm gonna be there right with you. We're gonna leave you. Oh yes, I'm going to My Father, but listen, I'm here with you. I'm not just abandoning you; I'm not leaving you. I will not leave you comfortless or as orphans," He said, "I will come to you." We know He came to them in the Holy Spirit. But not only this, He's with her, but He promised when He ascended to her. The Bible says He led captivity captive and He gave gifts to men in Ephesians 4, and He gave some Apostles, He gave some pastors, He gave some evangelists, some prophets, some teachers, and all these gifts to the church so that the ascended Lord from heaven can continue by means of His ministers to nourish and build up the church. Why? So that they can be edified and grow in love and not be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine but growing and growing and growing and maturing so they come into the perfect stature of the Son of God.

He didn't just abandon His bride; He gave His bride gifts so that they can minister His truth to them. He gave the Spirit of God, He said, "I'll be with them, with you even to the end of the world." He gave His Holy Spirit not only to be with us but to comfort us, to guide us, and to strengthen His bride. He gave her His Word; He didn't leave her without the Word of truth to sanctify us, to encourage us, to strengthen us, to confirm us in God's Word, to remind us of the things that He had taught us and has taught His disciples. Why? Because He wants His church to realize and to understand and to be assured of what He is doing, which is nourishing her and cherishing her through all these ways.

It's okay, that's good for the nourishing part, but what about the cherishing part? What about the part where we're comforted? Well, we said the Holy Spirit comforts, but more than this, the Bible teaches us that God has poured out His love into our hearts. God doesn't want His church just to know intellectually that He is committed to the nurturing of the body; He wants His bride to feel and to know the love that He has for her. This is why He's given us also the Spirit so that we can sense His love, that we can know His joy. This is the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace. It's the peace of God which passes all understanding. Why? Because He's comforting His bride, He's coming to her in comfort to give her a sense of His presence and warmth that she might know that God is near her, not only

intellectually to help her grow, mature her, to stimulate her, but to grow not only in knowledge but in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this He does not only to nourish but to cherish His bride.

And He does all this, my friends, not with the rod of His anger but in gentleness and in meekness and in tenderness. For it was said of Jesus Christ Himself that a bruised reed He shall not break and a smoking flax He shall not quench. The bruised reed is that reed that would be so easily just stepped on and crushed and bent and just so normal to walk over it, crush it, leave it behind. It's already bruised; it's already essentially broken. But you know what Jesus does? He comes to that broken soul, to that broken-hearted one, and He binds the broken-hearted. He takes the bruised reed, and He doesn't let it continue to fall and to snap and to break. He doesn't discard that which most men would usually discard. He doesn't just step on that which most men would usually step on. He comes down in condescension and picks up that which is broken, and He strengthens that bruised reed and He gives strength to it and cherishes it so that it can mature and that it can grow and it can be strengthened. A bruised reed He doesn't break, and the Bible says a smoking flax He doesn't quench.

You ever seen a smoldering candle, and that wick right at the end is just that little bit of flame that's left, and it's just about to go out? He says He doesn't quench the smoking flax. Oh, when we see the candle like that, we say, "Hun, it's all done, get it out of here, buy another one." But when the Lord sees us with a little light left in our souls, a little strength left in our being, He fans that little flame that it becomes like a blazing fire to give light to the whole house. He doesn't just snuff it out and say, "Oh, you Christians, oh, you people, you fail me all the time. I don't know what's going on with you." No, He comes, strengthens, breathes life back into that which is weak. This Jesus does to His bride; He nourishes her, He cherishes her.

Consider, for example, how He did this to erring Peter. Peter denied the Lord, and what did Jesus do? He looked at him, and when Jesus looked at him and made eye contact with Peter, his heart melted because he knew. We don't see Jesus after that time scolding Peter for what he's done; He just looked at him, knew that he had fallen, He got the message, and He left it at that. Before Peter even fell, what did He say? "I'm praying for you, Peter, that your faith fail not. I'm not against you, Peter; I'm here for your nurturing. I'm here for your growing, that even when you fall, I'm going to be there for you." He responds in love to Peter, that even when Peter is being at the end, has gone back fishing, Jesus calls him and recommissions him back to that which he has done. And He does it by way of reminding him of his love. "Do you love me, Peter, more than these?" "Lord, You know that I love You." "Well, let me just hear you say it three times, Peter", strengthening him, helping him, reminding him. Go and look after my sheep, go and feed

my lambs, go and do that which I've called you to do." This is the way that Jesus works with His bride. This is the way that He nourishes His bride. This is the way that He cherishes His bride, and He sets forth this as an example for us, that as husbands, we would not break our wives who may be bruised reeds or quench a little bit of fire that is left in her soul, but we will come alongside her in comfort, love her, serve her, and raise her up to be a strong, beautiful, gracious, godly woman. But that takes a lot of grace.

Come with me to Colossians 3 in closing. Colossians chapter number three, this work of nourishing and cherishing, includes what is revealed here in verses 12-14. It says, "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection." We considered several weeks ago that the things outlined here in verses 12-13 are summarized in 1 Corinthians 13 as that which pertains to true love. True love is what is revealed in verses 12-13. So when Paul says, "Put on love," it's essentially putting on all those things: humility, tender mercies, compassion, and all those things. What does it require as a husband to be like Jesus? It requires putting on love, putting on the graces of Jesus Christ, to live a life that is not just characterized by a fuzzy emotional feeling or mere sexual urges and saying, "Well, that's because I love my wife," but much more than that, realizing that it includes all these graces outlined in this passage. Love seen in tender mercies, love seen in compassion, love seen in humility, love seen in forgiving one another, not holding things against each other, love seen with longsuffering and meekness, love seen in all these ways. If we are to be husbands who love our wives as Christ loved the church, we must put on the love of Christ and live out this love.

But passage in verse number 19 teaches us that there is one enemy to nourishing and cherishing your wife. It says here, "Husbands, love your wives (nourishing and cherishing is part of loving), and do not be bitter toward them." The one thing that will rob you of love towards your wife is bitterness. What is bitterness? It is essentially hatred in the heart held against another. "But no one ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church." He says, "You want to love your wives? You can't love your wife and at the same time be bitter with her. You can't nourish and cherish her and at the same time be bitter with her. These two things cannot coexist together." You may ask, "How do I know, Josh, if I am being bitter towards her? Do you magnify her faults? Do you overreact in small matters, which reveal that you have previous offenses that have been undealt with? Are you cold to her, and what I mean by that is that when she displays love to you, you don't find it within yourself to receive that love? That is a mark of bitterness, that you won't be affected by

the love of another because there's something there in your heart. Do you loathe at the thought of having to love her, or does it arise naturally from the desires or from the God-given love that you have within your heart?"

You might say, "Josh, but you don't understand my wife. She doesn't listen when I speak. She disrespects me, and I'm always at the receiving end of her emotional lashes. She nags and nags and nags and fills my heart with nagging." My friend, when she fills your heart with nagging, do not harden your heart against her. You see, many men punish their wives by failing to nourish and cherish her and to meet her needs because they are bitter toward her. Unresolved issues linger for years in a relationship, and the stone of their heart gets harder and harder in relation to their wives, justifying that they are but victims of an angry woman or a victim of a wife that doesn't perform the way that she should perform. We've been hurt, and so then they measure the love that they show to her by the love which they receive. I'm so glad that the Lord Jesus did not measure His love toward us by the love that He received from us because it was while we were yet sinners, He died for us. It was when we were His enemies, Christ died for the ungodly. When we were without strength, in due time, Christ died for us. My friends, the Bible teaches us that He came to us while we were wallowing in our sin, just like Israel wallowing there in her blood. But in mercy, He took her and brought her to Himself, covenanted with her, loved her, and never failed to continue loving her.

Paul's basically saying, if you're bitter with your wife, this is irrational. How can a man hate his own flesh? Tell yourself that next time you feel bitter with her. She's my body; how can I hate myself? This is crazy. I'm not going to let that spirit dwell within me, but I pray with Jesus, "Father, forgive them." I'm not going to hold my heart against my bride. She is bone of my bone; she is flesh of my flesh. I'm not going to sit there as a victim and say that she's done me wrong. I'm going to ask the hard question to myself: what could I have done better? That's a tough question to ask when you've been on the receiving end of wrong. Really tough question to ask when you've been on the receiving end of wrong, to ask yourself the question: what could I have done better? You know what it does? It humbles you to the point that it won't allow you to have a heart that is closed and bitter towards those who have hurt you.

Therefore, brothers, husbands, confess your bitterness to God. If it's something that's been lingering for a time and affecting your relationship, get your wife, if you need to talk this out and have this out. Sit her down and say, "Hun, I have been bitter towards you. Forgive me. Yes, I've been hurt. This is where you hurt me, but I have no excuse to be bitter towards you." Don't let past offenses keep you from obedience to God. Don't let past offenses keep you from nourishing and cherishing your bride, just as the

Lord does the church. I know this is heavy. I remember, He is head of you, even husband. If you're feeling bruised and broken, and if your flax is smoking, as it were, He's here to stir up your heart to obey Him this morning, to comfort you in your affliction, also to not break you, even as a bruised reed, but to raise you up to do that which He has called you to do. This is the Word of God. This is the wisdom of God. The grace of God be upon us to help us love our wives and nourish and cherish them, just as the Lord does the church.

Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, O Lord our God, this is difficult truth, but nonetheless, Lord, it is Your truth. May we love every part of Your word, and may we apply ourselves to it. Lord, I pray that You would restore, strengthen, and encourage every husband here, Lord, to love his wife with a pure heart fervently, to display the love of God to his dear bride. That You would make each home represented here a place of flourishing, nurturing, warmth, comfort. Dear God, I pray You have mercy on us and strengthen us to do Your will, for we find that in us, Lord, that is in our flesh, dwells no good thing. But thank You, Lord, You have given us of Your Spirit to lift us up and to empower us to obey Your commandments. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.