



Bible Student's Notebook™

Weekly

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XX
Issue 489

As Christ

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

HUSBANDS LOVE YOUR WIVES AS ...?

Strange as it is, some dare suggest that what Paul really meant in Ephesians 5:25 was no more than

Husbands love your wives as also saith the law.

Husbands love your wives as also your neighbor [associate].

In other words, some would reduce the love of Christ in the husband to: "Don't hit her, don't starve her, don't freeze her." Really? Is that all there is to it?

If so, why did Paul bring Christ into the equation at all? If that's all there was to it, why didn't Paul just say that? Why didn't he just say what he meant?

We don't need master-teachers, skilled in the art of endless debate, somehow to explain away the simple language of this wonderful phrase of Scripture, "*Husbands, love your wives ...*" Now listen carefully to what Paul writes next:

... even as Christ also loved the ecclesia, and gave Himself for it.

These words are so simple that a young child can grasp them and their significance. It takes amazing effort to explain away their clarity.

Surely we can learn much from Eden's garden as well as the Mosaic law in relationship to marriage; but Paul unveils tremendous new ground for the husband/wife relationship: Christ!

While it is suggested that the true meaning of these words is somehow limited to a context of a few verses (:25-30), the rich meaning of this phrase is actually to be understood in the broader context, taking us back to the beginning of the chapter.

The phrase "*and gave Himself for it*" looks backwards to :2. Paul plainly tells us exactly what that "giving" of Christ's love



for us was: (1) an offering, and (2) a sacrifice. The *Concordant Literal Version (CV)* translates the Greek word rendered "offering" in the *KJV* as "*approach present*." An approach present was a gift offered to win another's favor. It was a humble, sacrificial act to enable the giver to draw near to the recipient. An approach present was not chocolates and flowers. It represented a most significant sacrifice on the part of the giver. So, according to Paul's own context, the husband's love is to be an "*approach present*," an "*offering*" of himself to his wife.

A whole new, never-before-known love was introduced by God through His Son, and it is that kind of love that the Father now has designed to be lived through husbands: a self-sacrificing love about which the law simply knew nothing. Christ represents the pinnacle of love and sacrifice, and Paul dares to hold up Christ's love for the ecclesia as a model for the husband. What a glorious privilege and divine honor we husbands have been graciously granted.

ALL I WANT FROM MY WIFE

Some husbands can be heard complaining, "All I want from my wife is for her to be ... loving ... giving ... gracious ... co-operative, etc." While these are wonderful ideals, and undoubtedly we should endeavor to lead our wives on a spiritual journey that would have us grow *together* in these areas, our responsibilities as husbands are not lessened by our wives' lack in any or all of them. Loving our wives is not at all contingent on their responses.

Husbands, be loving your wives according as Christ also loves the ecclesia, and gives Himself up for its sake (Ephesians 5:25).

This is a clear, stand-alone truth. Christ's love and giving up of Himself for us was in no way contingent on our own level of love, grace or co-operation: it was unmerited. This is Paul's point regarding our role with our wives. No one in the Old Testament ever could have known such a remarkable truth as this – because they never could have imagined the extent of selfless love outpoured at Calvary.

(see *As CHRIST*, page 4315)



Bible Student's Notebook™

Weekly

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This free weekly electronic publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

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As CHRIST (continued from front page)

Will we ever “get” what we long for from our wives? Perhaps to some degree, but that is beside the point. Husbands have a higher calling than merely to “receive”: they are called to selfless “giving.” Some husbands are busy stressing to their wives the word “*subject*” (“*submit*”) in Ephesians 5:22, all the while avoiding the “*gives*” in :25. Husbands who consume themselves with their wives’ shortcomings are usually the same ones who fail to look in the mirror to see their own. To adapt our Savior’s words,

Why do you notice the splinter in your wife’s eye and fail to see the plank in your own eye? How dare you say to your wife, “Let me take out the splinter that is in your eye,” and you never notice the plank in your own eye? What a hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see properly to take out the splinter in your wife’s eye (cf. Matthew 7:3-5),

Husbands’ standard excuse for not doing what God has called them to do is to follow Adam in shifting the blame to our wives. It is always somebody else’s fault. If our wives were just somehow different, we would love them more and give up ourselves for them. We as husbands must be done with our selfish victim mentality. God is behind all of our circumstances, including our marital ones, and all that we are going through is for our good.

The husband’s sacrificial love and giving to his wife are not merely petty matters; they are principles on which the divine structure of the universe is founded. The sooner we learn these grand truths, the further along we will be in our spiritual development. We will review the lessons of these divine principles over and over until Christ is formed in us. This life is the training and preparation for our celestial calling and responsibilities. Don’t waste its priceless lessons. Make the most of them. We will be thankful for every lesson learned at the appearing of Christ – and make no mistake about it: there will be a great surprise waiting for us, for many of those who have appeared to be great spiritual teachers and leaders here in this life will be dwarfed by those whom Father has privately taught the principles of divine love and self-sacrifice.

Yet now are remaining faith, expectation, love – these three. Yet the greatest of these is LOVE (I Corinthians 13:13).

One may excel greatly in faith and hope, but Paul clearly tells us that without love we are “*nothing*” (:2), and ALL of our other efforts, no matter how noble they may appear to others, benefit “*nothing*” (:3). *Faith, hope and love:* having only the first two out of the three leaves us destitute. Love is faith’s and expectation’s superior. As husbands, let’s learn well the lessons of Christ’s love. Let’s not come up empty at His appearing.

HELP OF A DIFFERENT KIND

I will make him an help meet for him (Genesis 2:18).

Make for him will I a helper as his complement (CV).

Sometimes a husband can be discouraged in his ministry by what he considers to be his “inadequate wife.” “After all,” he laments, “She doesn’t qualify as a helper.” Perhaps this is true. In some cases this situation results from the man having acted rashly and not taken the time to note this deficiency prior to his taking on the responsibilities of a covenant of marriage. Other men may contend that she has become unhelpful since the covenant was established; but are they not then suggesting that their wife somehow has become unhelpful while under their husbandly ministry of nurture and loving care?

The reality of the divine method is that even an apparently “unhelpful” wife is indeed of great assistance to her husband. As hard as it is in the middle of our greatest trials, we must never forget that our “*affliction*” is divinely “*working for us*” (II Corinthians 4:17), or as the CV says, “*is producing for us a transcendentally transcendent eonian burden of glory.*” When faith grasps this, husbands will, with Paul, be able to “*be glorying also in afflictions*” (Romans 5:3).

Glorying in our afflictions is a lesson we must learn repeatedly, and there is no better place to learn it than in the home.

CHOOSING THE “RIGHT” WIFE, OR BEING THE RIGHT HUSBAND?

Sometimes a husband may grumble about his “choice” of a wife. He’ll speak of her incompatibility, her lack of interest in mutual things, her indifference to spiritual matters, her brokenness, her deficiency of physical appeal, etc.

Interestingly, in Old Testament times marriages were commonly arranged. Although we do not necessarily promote a return to its practice, that does not mean that it was without any merit. One interesting thing that it and the levirate law (where a man was required to marry his brother’s widow) do is that they demonstrate that a man can love and care for a woman – *any woman* – even one they did not choose for themselves. The bottom line is that marriage is not so much about “choosing” the “right” wife, as it is about being the right husband.

Paul did not write:

*Husbands love your ideal wives
Husbands love your loving wives
Husbands love your helpful wives
Husbands love your Proverbs 31 wives
Husbands love your non-deficient wives
Husbands love your uncomplicated wives
Husbands love your unbroken wives
Husbands love your compatible wives
Husbands love your submissive wives
Husbands love your spiritual wives
Husbands love your believing wives*

Husbands love your attractive wives
Husbands love your supermodel wives
Husbands love your sexy wives

No, without any qualification whatsoever, Paul simply wrote:

Husbands love your wives ...

WIFE PLEASING

He who is married cares for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife (I Corinthians 7:33).

Wow, did Paul really say that? When was the last time you heard *wife pleasing* taught?

One reason that this important principle is often overlooked is that these words are frequently seen in a negative light; but Paul does not write these words disparagingly, as if *wife pleasing* were somehow dishonorable. He simply states them as a straightforward fact.

Paul presents “wife pleasing” as an argument for singleness (in reality or practice) based *only* on two contextual criteria:

the present distress (:26);
time is short (:29).

Both of these statements were the current context of Corinth in approximately 57 A.D. Neither of these statements were even in consideration 5-10 years after Paul wrote them; and neither are they considerations in the context of our day.¹

Gnostic influence, not the teachings of Paul, produces a disparaging look at things pertaining to this life – including *wife pleasing*. “*The things that are of the world*” are viewed as tainted and evil, and wife pleasing as a result is seen as “unspiritual.” This ancient error, adopted and advanced by Roman Catholicism, suggests that one should approach marriage halfheartedly, as some necessary evil; that somehow the husband – who regrettably missed the superior state of singleness – should now actually treat his wife as if she and he

1. For more on this subject, see the author's article, “The Current era is Limitless” (*Bible Student's Notebook*, #488).

were both single. This of course is contrary to Paul's later revelation and encouragement in the details of earthly things:

Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men (Colossians 3:23).

All, whatsoever you may be doing, work from the soul, as to the Lord and not to men (CV).

It is also contrary to Paul's great emphasis on attention to domestic duties:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church [ecclesia], and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25).

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord (Ephesians 5:22).

I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house ... (I Timothy 5:14).

For Paul, it is the details of ideal family life that are a prerequisite to taking care of the ecclesia (“*controlling his own household ideally*” I Timothy 3:4, CV), for “*if anyone is not aware how to control his own household, how will he care for the ecclesia of God?*” (:5). Even the offering of service to the ecclesia is based first on ideal household service from which one is “*procuring for themselves an ideal rank ... in the faith*” (:12-13).

A husband who erroneously attempts to conduct his life as though he had no wife most likely will find himself *actually* not having a wife!

THE SIN OF HUSBANDS: BITTERNESS

Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them (Colossians 3:19).

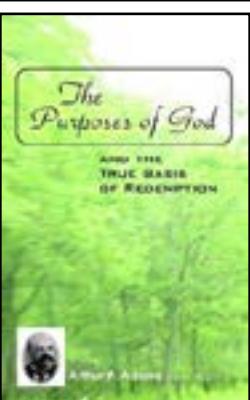
Divine revelation alerts husbands to their natural hindrance to loving their wives: bitterness. Bitterness is defined as,

This is a compilation of some of Arthur P. Adams' smaller works that first appeared in his periodical *The Spirit of the Word* in 1885. Adams suffered greatly for the truths presented here. The riches found within these pages deserve to be preserved for future generations. Even though Adams wrote over one hundred years ago, in many ways his writings are just as fresh as if they had been written today.

This is THE TRUE BASIS OF REDEMPTION – God our Creator, responsible for His Own creation, and every attribute of His being pledged to its successful completion. God is able, and He will. The creature may rest secure on that basis – the all sufficient ground and full assurance of his deliverance and final triumph in the redemption of Jesus Christ. – A.P. Adams

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anger and disappointment at being treated unfairly; resentment²

a feeling of anger and unhappiness.³

Some husbands tell us that they can't help the negative feelings that they have toward their wives. A husband may say that he can't "help" having these feelings, but certainly one can "help" what is done about them. Negative "feelings" of bitterness or otherwise can't be used as an excuse. Feelings are fickle. Feelings aren't trustworthy. Feelings should never lead our way. Feelings are great servants, but dangerous masters. We must not allow ourselves to be dominated by our feelings.

Adam Clarke (1760-1832) wrote concerning this passage,

Wherever bitterness is, there love is lacking. And where love is lacking in the married life, there is hell upon earth.⁴

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown remind us that,

Many who are polite abroad, are rude and bitter at home.⁵

The divine, Pauline instruction, followed immediately after the directive to love our wives, is to "be not bitter against them." A.T. Robertson (1863-1934) tells us plainly that, "This [bitterness] is the sin of husbands," and that it is in the "present middle imperative in prohibition: 'Stop being bitter.'"⁶

2. *Oxford Dictionary*.

3. *Cambridge Dictionary*.

4. *Adam Clarke Commentary*, 1832.

5. *Commentary*, 1871.

6. *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, 1927.

Christ's love was willingly self-sacrificial; yet, as husbands, is ours resentful? Does Christ resent the ecclesia for all that it puts Him through? Is He ever bitter and angry toward us for all of His personal labors and loss – sacrificed for us?

Negative feelings toward our wives should be for us an immediate indication of the hardness of our own hearts. We must ever look to the Savior for correction and encouragement of such sinful attitudes.

JUST SHORT OF FULFILLMENT

For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who has subjected the same in hope (Romans 8:20).

For to vanity was the creation subjected, not voluntarily, but because of Him Who subjects it, in expectation (CV).

Husbands often are discouraged because they live just short of fulfillment. As a husband, do you keenly sense that something is missing? That something is lacking? That satisfaction is elusive?

According to Romans 8:20, God has *subjected* you, as well as the rest of His creation, to *vanity*, making you unfulfilled, unsatisfied, disappointed, disheartened, discouraged, frustrated, irritated, empty and hollow. Are you not deeply aware of this state of subjection?

Looking at the definition of our English word "vanity," reading it slowly, ask yourself, "Does this definition sound a little too familiar?" "Do these words seem a little like my own life?" ►



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emptiness; lack of substance to satisfy desire ... fruitless desire or endeavor; trifling labor that produces no good ... empty pleasure; vain pursuit; idle show; unsubstantial enjoyment.⁷

The Greek word ματαιότης (*mataiotēs*) rendered “*vanity*” is defined as,

emptiness;⁸
seeking without finding.⁹

Do these words also resonate somewhere deep within you? Have you long sought for something which would make everything settled and right in your marriage? Has the complete contentment for which you have always sought seemingly lurked just outside of your reach?

“If I could just ...”

“If she would just ...”

“... then things would be different and I would be complete.”

To contemplate more thoroughly what God has truly subjected us to, thoughtfully consider the way “*vanity*” in Ro-

7. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Dictionary*, 1828.

8. James Strong, *Strong's Greek Dictionary*, #G3153.

9. E.W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament*.

mans 8:20 is translated in the follow versions:

*aimless frustration;*¹⁰
*spoil;*¹¹
*imperfection;*¹²
*folly;*¹³
*failure and unreality;*¹⁴
*futility;*¹⁵
*weakness;*¹⁶
*limitation;*¹⁷
*dissolution.*¹⁸

Do these words echo in some empty recess of your heart? Plainly, we were created *deficient in ourselves* so that we would need to find our *sufficiency outside of ourselves*. Yet, we look in the wrong places when we ultimately seek our sufficiency *anywhere* other than in God.

Paul, in light of the ministry committed to him, was acutely aware of his own deficiency:

Who is sufficient for these things? ... Not that we are suf-

10. An Understandable Version.

11. Bible in Worldwide English.

12. Montgomery New Testament.

13. The Riverside New Testament.

14. Weymouth New Testament.

15. Moffatt New Testament.

16. New Life Study Testament.

17. Phillips New Testament.

18. [i.e., putrefaction] Original New Testament.

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ficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God" (II Corinthians 2:16; 3:5).

Our constant unsettled state and insatiable inner longings, our elusive, nagging lack of complete fulfillment, are but gentle, though sometimes not so gentle, reminders of our need of Him.

We're *all* broken – every last one of us – this means husbands as well as wives. It's God's design for our earthly lives. He keeps us ever deficient so that He may teach us our supreme sufficiency *in Him*. This is a keystone truth, a lifelong lesson: He *alone* is our sufficiency.

DEFICIENT AS A HUSBAND

Will we as husbands ever love and lead our wives as fully as we should? Of course not, for even at our best we fall endlessly short. The truths of Romans 8:20 also speak of our being subjected to incompetency, ineptness, weakness, feebleness and failing.

The Greek word for "vanity" is also defined as:

inutility;¹⁹
frailty, lack of vigor.²⁰

The *Concordant Version* translates II Corinthians 2:16 and 3:5 using the word "competent" as antithetical to "vanity."

And for this who is competent? ... Not that we are competent of ourselves, to reckon anything as of ourselves, but our competency is of God.

19. James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*.

20. Joseph Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

As with our deficiency, our weakness and failures are likewise reminders of our own need of God. He keeps us ever *incompetent* so that He may teach us His supreme *competency*. This, too, is a foundational truth, one that takes a lifetime to learn. He alone is our competency.

Remember these words the next time you struggle with dissatisfaction and inability:

not willingly (Romans 8:20);

not voluntarily (CV, *Dabhar*);

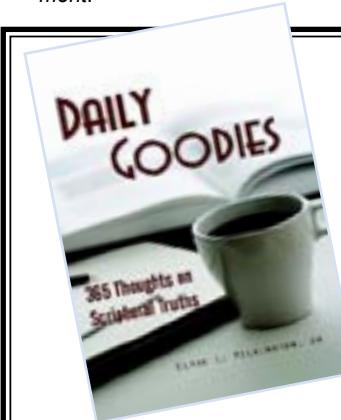
not by choice (Rotherham).

Your incompetency and your deficiency as a husband are not particularly your fault. You didn't sign up for this lack. You didn't ask for it. It is simply part of God's current design for you – all for your greater good and that of your wife and family. One day, after our terrestrial education has passed and our immortality is effected by resurrection, all of this vanity will be gloriously corrected. For now, it's in our incompetency that we find competency, and it's in our deficiency that we find sufficiency – because in the end it is designed to lead us to Him.

Well did Paul learn from God,

"My grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in your weakness." Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me (II Corinthians 12:9). ■

(Excerpted from his upcoming book, *Wife Loving*.)



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