

The Husband's Sacrificial and Benevolent Leadership and the Wife's Respectful Submission Ephesians 5.22-33

Interpretive Translation

²²Wives submit to your own husbands as you would submit to the Lord, ²³because a husband is in leadership over his wife like Christ is in leadership over the church [being himself savior of that body].

²⁴So as the church submits to Christ, in like manner wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and sacrificed himself on the cross for her, ²⁶so that he might purify her by cleansing her with scripture, as though with a washing in water; ²⁷all this with the goal that he might present the church to himself as glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or something of such a kind, rather that she be pure and blameless. ²⁸In this manner, the husbands ought to love their own wives as they love their own bodies.

The one who loves his own wife is loving himself; ²⁹for no one ever hated his own body, rather he nourishes and comforts it, just as Christ nourishes and comforts the church, ³⁰because we are members of his body [the church]. ³¹For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.

³²This mystery is great! I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. ³³Nevertheless, in this manner, each husband among you must love his own wife as he loves himself, and each wife must respect her husband.

Exegetical Central Idea

Where Christian couples find a model for their relationship is in Christ's relationship with the church: in Christ's sacrificial and benevolent leadership and the church's respectful submission [5.22-33].

Exegetical Sentence Outline

I. What wives are to do is submit to their husbands in everything, as if to Christ, because a husband is leader over his wife as Christ is over the church [5.22-24].

A. What wives are to do is submit to their husbands as if to the Lord [5.22].

1. What the wives are to do is submit to their own husbands [5.22a].
2. The manner in which wives are to submit to their husbands is as if to the Lord [5.22b].

B. The reason wives submit to their husbands is that a husband is leader over his wife like Christ is over the church [5.23].

1. The reason wives submit to their husbands is because a husband is leader over his wife [5.23a].
2. The manner in which a husband is leader over his wife is like Christ is leader over the church [5.23b].
3. The reason Christ is leader over the church is he is savior of the church [5.23c].

C. The manner in which wives submit to their husbands is in everything, as the church submits to Christ [5.24].

1. The manner in which wives submit to their husbands is as the church submits to Christ [5.24a].
2. What the wives are to do is submit to their own husbands in everything [5.24b].

II. What husbands must do is love their wives sacrificially and benevolently, as Christ loved the church [5.25-28b].

A. What husbands must do is love their wives like Christ loved the church, sacrificially for her benefit [5.25].

1. What the husbands must do is love their wives [5.25a].
2. The manner in which husbands love their wives is like Christ loved the church [5.25b].
3. The manner in which husbands love their wives is like Christ sacrificing to benefit her [5.25c].

B. The purpose of Christ's suffering was to purify the church so she would be pure and blameless [5.26-27].

1. The purpose of Christ's suffering was that he might purify the church [5.26a].
2. The means by which Christ would purify the church was by cleansing her with his Word [5.26b].
3. The purpose of Christ cleansing the church was to present the church to himself as glorious [5.27a].
4. The manner in which the church would be glorious was by not having any blemishes [5.27b].
5. The manner in which the church would be glorious was by being pure and blameless [5.27c].

C. The manner in which husbands must love their wives is as Christ loved the church and they love their bodies [5.28a-b].

1. The manner in which husbands love their wives is like Christ loved the church [5.28a].
2. The manner in which husbands love their wives is like they love their own bodies [5.28b].

III. What husbands must do is love their wives as they love themselves, because they are one flesh with them [5.28c-33b].

A. The reason a husband loves his wife is that he cares for her like his own body [5.28c-29c].

1. What one is doing when he loves his own wife is he is loving himself [5.28c].
2. The reason a husband loves his wife is that no one ever hated his own body [5.29a].
3. The reason a husband loves his wife is that a man nourishes his own body [5.29b].
4. The reason a husband loves his wife is that a man comforts his own body [5.29c].

B. The manner in which a husband cares for his wife is like Christ cares for the church [5.29d-30].

1. The manner in which a husband cares for his wife is like Christ cares for the church [5.29d].
2. The reason Christ cares for the church is because we are members of his body [5.30].

C. What marriage entails for a man is to become one flesh with his wife [5.31].

1. What marriage entails for a man is to leave his father and mother [5.31a].
2. What marriage entails for a man is to be joined to his wife [5.31b].
3. The result of man being joined to his wife is the two will become one flesh [5.31c].

D. What the great revelation was which Paul revealed was the relationship between Christ and the church [5.32].

1. What Paul is saying is a great revelation from God [5.32a].
2. What the revelation was that Paul revealed was the relationship between Christ and the church [5.32b].

E. The manner in which a husband must love his wife is as he loves himself, for they are one flesh [5.33a-b].

1. The manner in which a husband must love his wife is as if they are one flesh [5.33a].

2. The manner in which a husband must love his wife is like he loves himself [5.33b].

IV. What the wife must do is respect her husband [5.33c].

Commentary with Phrase Outline Headings

Introduction

Characteristically, Paul began this letter with elaboration on the gospel of Jesus Christ. This elaboration consisted of four parts. First, Paul declared that all believers should praise God for the blessing of salvation, which includes being chosen by God, being predestined to adoption by God, and receiving grace, redemption, the spiritual understanding that God is bringing all things together in Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, who seals believers in Christ and is a pledge of their salvation [1.1-14]. Second, Paul prayed God would give the Ephesians further spiritual wisdom so they would understand the hope of God's calling on believers, the glorious wealth of God's inheritance in believers, and the surpassing greatness of God's power toward believers, which was manifested when God raised Christ from the dead, elevated him above all others, and put him in charge of the church [1.15-23]. Third, Paul taught that nobody deserved this salvation, but – despite believers formerly being spiritually dead in sin and wallowing in fleshly lust – God, in love and mercy, made them alive with Christ, by grace, through faith, as a gift, for the purpose of living in good works [2.1-10]. Fourth, Paul explained that salvation for the Ephesians was brought about by unifying them as believing Gentiles with the believing Jews into one household of God, a church that is unified and in which everyone has equal status as a member of God's people who share in God's promises [2.11-3.12].

Also characteristically, having established his gospel theology, Paul then taught how this theology should affect the character and life of the church and its members. He did this through six integrated exhortations. First, Paul prayed that God would strengthen the Ephesians so they could comprehend Christ's love sufficiently to be filled with God's character [3.13-21]. Second, Paul exhorted them as part of the church to live up to their calling to be God's people, to be characterized by unity, love, truthfulness, and sound doctrine [4.1-16]. Third, Paul contrasted this with admonishment not to continue living as they once had, in darkness, away from God, but rather to be renewed in their minds and live as chosen and renewed children of light, characterized by truthfulness, forgiveness, kindness, generosity, and encouraging speech [4.17-32]. Fourth, Paul called on them to be imitators of God, which would lead them to purity and actually shining God's light into their greater community [5.1-14]. Fifth, Paul exhorted them to a submission to God sufficient to be filled by the Holy Spirit, which would result in rejoicing, praise, thankfulness, and submission to each other in the church [5.15-6.09]. Sixth, Paul instructed them to put on the armor of God, so as to withstand the spiritual attacks that come directly from our spiritual adversaries, through our culture, or through our flesh [6.10-24].

In 5.21, Paul completed his illustration of the visible results of being filled by the Spirit with submission to one another within the church [Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 733]. While all people are equal in status before God [Gal 3.28], that does not preclude a hierarchy of authority [Hoehner, 726]. In 5.22-6.09, Paul would illustrate this submission with three relationships: wives with husbands; children with fathers; and slaves with masters. Our subject text reveals the first of these relationships. While such "household codes" were common in Hellenistic culture, this Christian model is based entirely on God's revelation through creation and through Christ, with the relationship of the church with Christ serving as the model for the relationship of wives with their husbands [Hoehner, 725].

I. Submitting to your husband in everything, as if to Christ [5.22-24]

Submitting to your husband as if to Christ [5.22]: In 5.21, Paul completed his illustration of the visible results of being filled by the Spirit – that within the church believers would submit themselves to one another – and then immediately [and somewhat tersely] launched into the first illustration of this submission with the command that wives were to submit to their own husbands. The nature of this

submission is revealed in the following verses [but for an advance look, one may see the Word Study “5.24: ὑποτάσσεται” in the Appendices].

There is no connective beginning this sentence. This is a terse transition to a new paragraph, but with an intimate link to the previous, being both an illustration of submission and dependent on that verb from 5.21. αἱ γυναῖκες is to be taken as a nominative for vocative and translated as “Wives,” not “Women,” because the context makes clear that the subject of the illustration is the marriage relationship between wives and husbands [so also “husbands” for ἀνδράσιν here; Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 58; Hoehner, 730; Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, ICC, 531].

Paul provided no verb [see Textual Criticism Problem “5.22: – [NA²⁷] vs. ὑποτασσεσθωσαν [V¹] vs. ὑποτάσσεσθε [V²]” in the Appendices], but the verb is implied from 5.21 [O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC, 411; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 367; Best, 531]. Paul said one aspect of being filled by the Spirit was “submitting yourselves to one another in reverence of Christ. Wives, to your own husbands as to the Lord...” Paul specified that this submission was to their own [τοῖς ἰδίοις] husbands. This is not a discussion about every woman submitting to every man; rather it is a discussion about the marriage relationship [Hoehner, 732; O’Brien, 411]. Also, in the cultural context, this command made clear that the wife was now under the husband’s leadership, not her father’s, important because in many Greek marriages this transfer of leadership did not take place, with the result that the wife often acted independently of her husband, hurting family unity [Hoehner, 728, 741].

Paul said wives should submit to their husbands as if to Christ [ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ]. That “Lord” here means Christ is clear from the present context, particularly 5.24, and that the term is singular whereas “husbands” is plural [Hoehner, 736; Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT, 384; Lincoln, 368; Best, 533]. There are multiple ways of taking the conjunction ὡς [Hoehner, 737-738], but the context of 5.24 makes it clear this is a comparison [though Hoehner, 738; O’Brien, 738; Bruce, 384; Lincoln, 368; Best, 533, who see elements of submitting to Christ in the submission to the husband, are not wrong about this implication, for to obey any scriptural command is to submit to Christ]. This is a strong imperative, about which Paul would elaborate in the following verses.

Comparing a husband’s leadership with Christ’s [5.23]: The wife submits to her husband because [ὅτι] the husband is the “leader” of the wife. Literally, Paul wrote that the husband was the “head” [κεφαλὴ] of the wife, but the meaning is similar to the English use, “head of the army”: the husband is the leader with authority over his wife [see the Word Study “5.23: κεφαλὴ” in the Appendices]. The man’s leadership in the household and the wife’s submission to him do not specify any particular behavioral patterns within the household as far as the division of household labor, income generation, childcare, or other activities, all of which may be culturally driven or individual to each household [O’Brien, 414]; rather it simply specifies a hierarchy of authority.

The husband’s leadership is characterized by Christ’s leadership [he is the “head”: κεφαλὴ] of the church [τῆς ἐκκλησίας; BDAG, 303-304]. The implications of this will be explained more fully in the coming verses. However, even in this verse, Paul brought out the character of Christ’s leadership by noting Christ’s sacrificial death on the church’s behalf [literally, he being “savior of the body”: σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος]. This does not imply husbands are saviors of their wives, it is just an elaboration on Christ’s leadership of the church [see the last paragraph of the aforementioned word study on κεφαλὴ]. But it is clear even in this verse that, as Christ’s leadership was characterized by a willingness to sacrifice for the benefit of the church, so too the husband’s leadership should be marked by benevolence and sacrificial servanthood.

Comparing a wife’s submission with the church’s [5.24]: Wives are to “submit” [the verb ὑποτάσσω; see the Word Study “5.24: ὑποτάσσεται” in the Appendices] to their husbands “in everything” [ἐν παντί], like the church submits to Christ. This submission implies the wife respects her husband’s leadership and lives by her husband’s standards and values such that the family functions in unity, and – while it might not be dependent on the love commanded of husbands in the following verses – it is a willing submission, not forced, is designed to be beneficial to the wife, not harmful, and would not include being forced into any kind of sinful behavior [all of which is discussed in the aforementioned word study on ὑποτάσσεται].

II. Loving your wife sacrificially and benevolently, as Christ loves the church [5.25-28b].

Loving your wife like Christ loves the church [5.25]: As with “wives” in 5.22, *Οἱ ἄνδρες* is to be taken here as a nominative for vocative and translated “Husbands,” not “Men.” Husbands are to “love” [*ἀγαπᾶτε*; BDAG, 5-6] their wives. The present tense suggests this is a continuous love [Best, 541]. It is noteworthy that the command is not to exercise the husband’s authority, but rather to love, which we shall see implies service [O’Brien, 419; Lincoln, 373; Best, 540]. Earlier in the letter, love was made a part of the Christian life in the church community [4.2, 15-16; 5.2] and now it is made integral to marriage [O’Brien, 419; Lincoln, 374]. Ideally, the husband’s love and the wife’s submission are fully realized together. However, even if the wife struggles with her submission, the husband should endeavor to show her the kind of love [the kind of leadership] developed in this passage [Lincoln, 374; particularly given his marriage vows probably included a pledge of unconditional love]. The length of this exhortation relative to the others in this section stresses its importance [Hoehner, 748].

Husbands are to love their wives in the way [*καθὼς*] Christ loved [*ἡγάπησεν*] the church [Hoehner, 748; Bruce, 386; O’Brien, 419]. Paul elaborated on this in the following verses, but already previously discussed is what is repeated here: that this was manifested in Christ’s willingness to sacrifice himself [literally, he “gave himself up”: *ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν* (BDAG, 761-762); both this verb and *ἡγάπησεν* are aorist, suggesting completed action] on the cross for the church’s benefit. In 5.2 Paul said Christ gave himself up for individual believers, and here we see this includes benefit to the church collectively [Hoehner, 750; O’Brien, 419; Lincoln, 374]. The implication is that husbands must be willing to sacrifice for the benefit of their wives [O’Brien, 420; Lincoln, 374].

Understanding Christ’s sacrifice for the church [5.26-27]: Christ sacrificed himself for the church, so that [*ἵνα* + subjunctive verb] he could purify her by cleansing her with his word [see Validation Problem “5.26: *αὐτὴν ἀγιάσει καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ῥήματι*” in the Appendices]. Christ wanted to “sanctify” [*ἀγιάσει*] the church, which is to consecrate her for his purposes and then purify her for those purposes, and he would do this by “purifying” or “cleansing” [*καθαρίσας*] her by his “word” [*ἐν ῥήματι*]. As believers understand and adopt scripture for their lives, they grow to be more like Christ, not just in behavior but [more importantly] in character; and as believers make up the church, so the church also becomes a better reflection of Christ’s character.

Christ’s ultimate goal [*ἵνα* + subjunctive verb, subordinate to the prior *ἵνα*; Hoehner, 757; Best, 544-545] in this purification was to “present” the church to himself as “glorious” [*ἐνδοξον*; BDAG, 332-333], which is to say she would not have any flaws [*μὴ ἔχουσιν στίλβον* (“spot”; BDAG, 938) ἢ *ρυτίδα* (“wrinkle”; BDAG, 908) ἢ *τι τῶν τοιούτων*], but rather be “pure” [or “holy”: *ἀγία*; BDAG, 10-11] and “blameless” [*ἄμωμος*; BDAG, 56]. The first verb here, *παραστήσει*, is translated “he might ‘present’” [Hoehner, 758; O’Brien, 424; Bruce, 389; Lincoln, 376]; BDAG [778] says “present” can have the connotation of “make” or “render” here, but they are taking too much from the context and such a meaning would be superfluous here. The point is that as the members of the church experience purification and transformation to be more like Christ [1.4], the church as a whole experiences this too, with the ultimate goal that the church, as the body of Christ, will fully reflect Christ’s purity and blamelessness. Hoehner [761] sees this as the culmination of the theology of the book.

Some think Christ had already endowed and continues to endow the church with these attributes [Lincoln, 377; Best, 545]; for some [e.g. Lincoln] this is based on the erroneous assumption that 5.32 implies Christ and the church are “one flesh” and the idea that Paul could not have looked into the future for this goal if he had been discussing the relationship in the past and present in this context; for some [e.g. Best] this is based on erroneously seeing a realized purity for believers in this letter. Against this would be our conclusions about the meanings of *ἀγιάσει* and *καθαρίσας*, which are not merely to consecrate but actually to purify [see the aforementioned validation problem for this verse], and the obvious fact that the church is not yet purified to the point of being without blemish, perfectly pure and blameless [Hoehner, 761]. O’Brien [424-425] argued that Paul used *παρίστημι* in other contexts where it

referred to the final day, in particular in 1 Cor 11.2, where Paul spoke of presenting the Corinthians in purity to Christ [he offered other arguments as well, but they were less impactful].

Loving your wife like Christ loves the church and you love your body [5.28a-b]: In light of Christ's efforts to consecrate and purify the church, husbands "ought" [ὀφείλουσιν; see Textual Criticism Problem "5.28: ὀφείλουσιν [καὶ] οἱ ἄνδρες [NA²⁷] vs. ὀφείλουσιν οἱ ἄνδρες [V¹] vs. καὶ οἱ ἄνδρες [V²]" in the Appendices] to love their wives and commit to their welfare, especially their spiritual welfare [O'Brien, 423-424]. As mentioned previously, Christ's love for the church is characterized by sacrificial servanthood and benevolence, so those traits should characterize the love of a husband for his wife also. As with wives toward their husbands, here it is specified that husbands are to love their own [ἑαυτῶν] wives. The article in 5.26 can be taken as possessive [Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 216; Hoehner, 747], but here this fact is made explicitly clear.

In a rather awkward transition, Paul here wrote husbands ought to love their own wives as [ὥς] they love their own bodies [τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα]. This is awkward because the statement is tied to the previous three verses syntactically by beginning with "In this manner" [οὕτως; O'Brien, 426; Lincoln, 378; Hoehner, 762-763, citing the parallel structure of 5.24-25] but thematically leads into the subject of the following verses. Some take ὥς to imply the wives are the bodies of the husbands, rather than are to be loved as the bodies are loved [Hoehner, 764-765, though this would conflict with the parallel structure he mentioned earlier]. Others in agreement argue Paul wrote "as their own bodies" instead of "as themselves" because the husband and wife are "one flesh" and so husbands loving their wives is the same as loving themselves, which is not the same as loving their wives like they love themselves [Bruce, 391; O'Brien, 427]. This is possible, given that in the next sentence Paul wrote "The one who loves his own wife is loving himself..." and in 5.30 we see Christ cares for the church because we are members of his body. However, it is best to take ὥς as a simple comparative [Lincoln, 378] – to love their wives like they love their own bodies – for in 5.31 the wife becomes "one flesh" with her husband, not "the flesh" of her husband, this simpler answer conveys the same depth of love as the more complex one, and it is possible to see a pattern of "leapfrogging" in this passage: in 5.28b, husbands love their wives like they love their own bodies; in 5.28c, loving their wives is loving themselves; in 5.29, there is elaboration about the body comparison; in 5.31, there is elaboration about the loving themselves comparison. However, we need not be dogmatic about it; again, the same depth of love is in view either way.

III. Loving your wives because you are one flesh with them [5.28c-33b].

Caring for your wife like you do for your own body [5.28c-5.29c]: Paul both elaborated on his transition statement and started a new thought: husbands love their wives like they love their own bodies, for [implied] the one who loves his own wife is loving himself. Just as it is natural to love oneself, so too should be the husband's love for his wife [Hoehner, 765]. The naturalness is expressed in the next clause [Hoehner, 766], "for no one ever 'hated' [ἐμίσησεν; BDAG, 652-653] his own 'body.'" Literally, "body" here is the term "flesh" [σάρκα; BDAG, 914-916], but without any of the negative connotations attached to the term when Paul was dealing with sin issues [Bruce, 392; Best, 549].

Here, no man hates his own body, rather he "nourishes" [ἐκτρέφει; BDAG, 311; used again in 6.4] and "comforts" [θάλπει; BDAG, 442] it. This implies not only that the husband's leadership is not characterized by tyranny [Best, 550], but also that the husband is looking out for his wife's wellbeing, proactively doing what is necessary for her to thrive, just as he would do for himself [Bruce, 391], tenderly attending to her needs [O'Brien, 428]. The present tense of these verbs suggests the continuity of their nature [Hoehner, 767; Best, 550].

Caring for your wife like Christ cares for the church [5.29d-30]: The example for such loving attentiveness to nourishing and comforting is Christ with the church. Christ's leadership is characterized not only by authority but also by sustenance, which is a model for husbands [Hoehner, 768; O'Brien, 428]. This includes all that Christ does for the church, in terms of sanctifying grace, protection, the

ordinances, working through the spiritual gifts and teaching of the Scriptures, the blessings inherent in biblical community, et cetera [Best, 550].

Christ loves us so, because we are “members” [μέλη; BDAG, 628] of his body, the church. Interestingly, μέλος normally is used to refer to a part of the human [or an animal] body, so Paul continues the analogy here of the church being Christ’s body, here individual believers being members of that living body [Hoehner, 768; O’Brien, 428]. Both husbands and their wives are members of Christ’s body, being nourished and comforted by Christ, which should all the more motivate husbands in this direction [O’Brien, 429].

Becoming one flesh with your wife [5.31]: Paul quoted Genesis 2.24 from the Septuagint. Because of love, a man will leave his parents and will be “joined” [προσκολληθήσεται; future passive] to his wife. The verb here translates the active Hebrew קָרַב, which means to “stick,” “cling,” or “join” [HALOT: 209]. The Greek term is passive, though the Hebrew passive stems for this word are rare and not translated by προσκολλάω in the Septuagint. For the Greek term, BDAG [881-882] defines the verb as “adhere closely,” “be faithfully devoted,” or “join”; EDNT [unsigned, 3:172] defines it as “adhere to,” “be inseparably bound,” or “join with devotion.” The quotation ends with, “and the two will become one flesh.” This supports what Paul has said about a husband loving his wife as he loves himself [Hoehner, 772]: before God they are one, and they should function in such unity in their marriage and identify with each other thus also; though they retain their individual distinctiveness within this unity [Hoehner, 775].

The question is to what within this context this verse alludes, when it begins with, “For this reason” [ἀντὶ τοῦτου; BDAG, 87-88]. Some believe it refers to 5.29d-30, and that Paul is now applying this verse to the relationship between Christ and the church [O’Brien, 429-430; Lincoln, 380], to support the assertion that believers are members of Christ’s body [O’Brien, 429-430]. However, in this passage, Paul is making a point about marriage, and using the analogy of Christ and the church to support that point about marriage; to believe he would use Gen 2.24 about marriage to support the analogy would not make sense in that case. If the quotation of Gen 2.24 refers to only the most recent verses, it would seem to relate best to 5.28c-5.29c: after all, Paul was not arguing that Christ left his father and mother to marry the church [Lincoln, 380], he was arguing there is a reason that for a husband loving his wife is like loving himself.

Appreciating the great revelation about Christ and the church [5.32]: Paul said this mystery is great, and then elaborated to say he was speaking with reference to the relationship between Christ and the church [see Validation Problem “5.32: τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν” in the Appendices]. It is only in the New Testament, largely through the writings of Paul, that God revealed the creation of the church and its composition of both Gentiles and Jews on equal footing [2.11-22]. In this passage, he revealed Christ’s headship of the church, the church being Christ’s body, Christ’s sacrificial and benevolent love for the church, his goal of purifying the church, his care for the church, and the individual believer being a member of Christ’s body. Together, that is a great revelation, and so Paul paused here to reflect on that revelation and admire it, which must have been particularly gratifying as it came from a supportive illustration of the application of submission in marriage.

Caring for your wife because you are one flesh [5.33a-b]: Bringing the reader back to the marriage relationship [πλὴν], Paul reiterated that a husband must love his own wife as he loves himself. This serves as a summary of what Paul has been teaching in this section, but also becomes more personal because Paul individualized to say “each” husband, with the connotation that “every husband” is expected to behave in this way [Best, 558].

IV. Respecting your husband [5.33c].

Respecting your husband [5.33]: Forming a sort of chiastic structure of wife-husband-husband-wife in the discussion [Best, 558; Lincoln, 384], this verse closes the section with the command that the wife must “respect” [φοβῆται] her husband. The individualization of the first half of the verse, relating to “each” husband, carries through to this half of the verse, speaking to “each” wife [Hoehner, 782; O’Brien,

436; Best, 558]. The point is that every husband and wife are expected to live this way, for only in then is the unity and character of the church protected.

Rather than an imperative, Paul used ἵνα + subjunctive. Some have taken this to imply purpose or result – that husbands love their wives in order that the wife might respect her husband – but with such a meaning one would expect the word order to be different, with ἵνα first in the clause [Hoehner, 783]. Others see this as an imperatival use of ἵνα, because of the parallel structure of the verse [Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 476-477; Hoehner, 783; O’Brien, 436; Lincoln, 384; Best, 559].

Regarding the meaning of φοβέω, Best [559] sees a continuum of meaning from terror through respect to reverence, and argues it cannot mean terror here since it comes in the context of her husband’s love, and it cannot mean reverence since it includes submission, so it must mean respect. Hoehner [783] does not see such a continuum in the respective meanings, so he concludes φοβέω generally means fear/revere, with respect being too mild a term, and so the command is for the wife to hold her husband in reverential fear due to his position as leader of the household. In 5.21, the noun form φόβος is used as an attitude of all believers toward a loving Christ, which is supposed to motivate them to submit to each other, so some see the wife having the fear of a believer who is subordinate to the husband’s leadership [O’Brien, 437; Lincoln, 385]. Certainly, the context of 5.22-24 indicates wives were to recognize the leadership of their husbands in the marriage and submit to that leadership, but this could be inferred from “respect” as suggested by BDAG [1060-1062] and EDNT [Balz, 3:429].

Conclusion

Elaborating on one of the three illustrations of Christian submission, in 5.22-33, Paul taught that Christian couples find a model for their relationship in Christ’s relationship with the church. Husbands are to model their leadership in the family on Christ’s sacrificial and benevolent leadership over the church [5.25-33a]; wives are to model their respectful submission to their husbands on the church’s respectful submission to Christ [5.22-24, 33b]. Thus Christian marriage is not just based on creation, but also on Christ’s love for, and relationship with, the church [Hoehner, 782, quoting Meyer]. This is part of God’s plan for spiritually transforming both husbands and wives, and for bringing unity and peace to both the household and the church [Hoehner, 727]. Properly exercised by all parties, this model for a Christian marriage relationship would be no more demeaning to wives than submitting to Christ is demeaning to the church [Hoehner, 729]. The ideal is the opposite of such divisiveness: a loving harmonious relationship [Hoehner, 784], the complete unity with diversity implied in the creation teaching that the two become one flesh.

Applications

Husbands: with Christ as your role model, learn to love your wife as Christ loves the church, in a sacrificial and beneficial way; let your leadership in the household be characterized by you lovingly nourishing and caring for your wife, always looking out for her wellbeing, always being prepared to sacrifice and live selflessly to bless her.

Wives: with the church as your role model, learn to submit to your husband’s leadership in the family, living by his standards and values, showing him proper respect, and learning to function in unity with him so that the family is more peaceful, worshipful, and a blessing to all.

Husbands and Wives: put aside your self-indulgence and learn to live in the marriage relationship with an attitude of serving each other [O’Brien, 412].

Appendices

Textual Criticism Problems

5.22: – [NA²⁷] vs. ὑποτασσέσθωσαν [V¹] vs. ὑποτάσσεσθε [V²]: External: NA²⁷ is witnessed by P⁴⁶ and B, two early witnesses of the Alexandrian text-type. P⁴⁶ is the earliest Greek Pauline witness, early third century; B is from the fourth century. V¹ is witnessed by κ, a fourth century manuscript of the Alexandrian text-type, and the old Latin manuscripts, which date back to the second century and represent the Western text-type. V² is witnessed by the Byzantine minuscules, which scholars believe reflect a fourth century archetype. Thus, all three readings have early witnesses. B is considered to be a high quality manuscript [unless otherwise noted, evaluation of manuscripts is from Wallace, “A Brief Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism,” 54-55]. P⁴⁶ is a looser translation, but that makes its agreement with B even more significant. NA²⁷ is the shorter reading, characteristic of its Alexandrian witnesses. κ is considered to be the best Greek manuscript for the epistles. There are only a few old Latin manuscripts for Paul’s letters, but it is significant when they agree, because the old Latin manuscripts were known for variety [Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 101]. V¹ is a longer reading, which is characteristic of the Western text-type of the old Latin manuscripts. The Byzantine minuscules generally are thought to be lesser witnesses than the early witnesses of the Alexandrian text-type. V² is a longer reading, characteristic of the Byzantine text-type. Thus, NA²⁷ and V¹ have the strongest character of witnesses. NA²⁷ has good genealogical solidarity for the Alexandrian text-type, though this is weakened by κ favoring one of the variants. V¹ has genealogical solidarity for the Western text-type. V² has genealogical solidarity for the Byzantine text-type. V¹ has the best early geographical spread, being represented in the Alexandrian and Western text-types. Thus, V¹ has the best combination of genealogical solidarity and early geographical spread. In summary, while all three readings have early witnesses, the NA²⁷ and V¹ have the strongest character of witnesses, and V¹ has the best combination of genealogical solidarity and early geographical spread, so the evidence slightly favors V¹ over NA²⁷.

Internal: It is unlikely an unintentional transcriptional error would occur in this passage due to visual or audio issues. It is possible a word could have been added or deleted inadvertently by a hurrying scribe experiencing an error of memory or moment of carelessness. There is no reason to believe there were any influences on the scribes due to doctrinal considerations. However, if NA²⁷ were original, then a scribe might be tempted to add a verb for one of several reasons. First, in a similar passage in Paul’s letter to the Colossians [3.18], he wrote, “Αἱ γυναῖκες, ὑποτάσσεσθε τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ὡς ἀνῆκεν ἐν κυρίῳ.” There are textual variants in that passage, but they do not involve the verb, so a scribe might have been tempted to add the verb which is the same as in V² [there is a similar construction in 1 Peter 3.1 with a participle]; also the preceding and following contexts both contain second person plural imperatives [Hoehner, 731]. If not taking the nominative to be acting as vocative in this sentence, a scribe might have been tempted to add the verb form found in V¹ for clarity, particularly if he did not see this sentence as having a close relationship with the previous one in the same paragraph. Current NA²⁷ punctuation assumes this relationship, but our literary analysis suggests 5.21 actually concludes the previous paragraph as one of the results expected from the imperative in 5.18b, and this issue also might have arisen when 5.22 began a scripture lesson, as it was known to in early lectionaries [Burer, Harris, and Wallace, eds., *New English Translation – Novum Testamentum Graece*, 865; Best, 531]. If one of the variants were original, there would be no reason to delete their respective verbs. NA²⁷ is the shorter and harder reading. In support of NA²⁷, omitting the verb form is consistent practice in this letter, even in this passage [22b, 23b-c, 24b, 28b, 29d, 33b], and is consistent with the other admonitions in this letter [Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd Ed., 541]. In summary, the internal evidence strongly favors NA²⁷, with it being the shorter and harder reading, it being consistent with other usage in the letter, and there being good motivation for scribes to add one of the two verb forms.

Overall: NA²⁷ is preferred [B]. While the external evidence gives a slight edge to V¹ because of its combination of genealogical solidarity and early geographical spread, the internal evidence overwhelmingly favors NA²⁷ with it being the shorter and harder reading, it being consistent with other usage in the letter, and there being strong motivation for scribes to add one of the two verb forms.

5.28: ὀφείλουσιν [καὶ] οἱ ἄνδρες [NA²⁷] vs. ὀφείλουσιν οἱ ἄνδρες [V¹] vs. καὶ οἱ ἄνδρες [V²]:
External: NA²⁷ is witnessed by P⁴⁶ and B, two early witnesses of the Alexandrian text-type. P⁴⁶ is the earliest Greek Pauline witness, early third century; B is from the fourth century. V¹ is witnessed by κ, a fourth century manuscript of the Alexandrian text-type, and the Byzantine minuscules, which scholars believe reflect a fourth century archetype. V² is witnessed by the old Latin manuscripts, which date back to the second century and represent the Western text-type, and D, a significant sixth century manuscript also of the Western text-type. Thus, all three readings have early witnesses. B is considered to be a high quality manuscript [unless otherwise noted, evaluation of manuscripts is from Wallace, “A Brief Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism,” 54-55]. P⁴⁶ is a looser translation, but that makes its agreement with B even more significant. NA²⁷ is the longer reading, which is not characteristic of its Alexandrian witnesses. κ is considered to be the best Greek manuscript for the epistles. The Byzantine minuscules generally are thought to be lesser witnesses than the early witnesses of the Alexandrian text-type. V¹ is a shorter reading, uncharacteristic of the Byzantine witnesses, but characteristic of the Alexandrian text-type of κ. There are only a few old Latin manuscripts for Paul’s letters, but it is significant when they agree, because the old Latin manuscripts were known for variety [Metger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 101]. D is the primary Greek witness to the Pauline letters for the Western text-type. V² is a shorter reading, uncharacteristic for its Western text-type witnesses. Thus, NA²⁷ has the best quality of witnesses, but V¹ has κ, which also is significant. NA²⁷ has good genealogical solidarity for the Alexandrian text-type, though this is weakened by κ favoring one of the variants. V¹ has genealogical solidarity for the Byzantine text-type. V² has genealogical solidarity for the Western text-type. V¹ has the best early geographical spread, being represented in the Alexandrian and Byzantine text-types. Thus, V¹ has the best combination of genealogical solidarity and early geographical spread. In summary, while all three readings have early witnesses, NA²⁷ has a somewhat better witnesses than V¹, while V¹ has a better combination of genealogical solidarity and early geographical spread.

Internal: It is unlikely an unintentional transcriptional error would occur in this passage due to visual or audio issues. It is possible a word could have been added or deleted inadvertently by a hurrying scribe experiencing an error of memory or moment of carelessness. There is no reason to believe there were any influences on the scribes due to harmonizing tendencies, contextual parallels, common expressions, similar constructions in Paul’s other letters, conflation, or doctrinal considerations. V² is the shortest and hardest reading. If NA²⁷ were original, there would be no reason to delete the conjunction [to get V¹]; an analytical scribe might have deleted the verb to give symmetry with 5.24b [to get V²] but in that case should have deleted the infinitive too. If V¹ were original, an analytical scribe might delete the verb and add the conjunction to give symmetry with 5.24b [to get V²], but in that case should have deleted the infinitive too; an analytical scribe might add the conjunction to give symmetry with 5.24b [to get NA²⁷], although this seems pointless when that verse lacks a verb. If V² were original, there would be no reason to delete the conjunction while adding the verb [to get V¹], but a scribe might add the verb to provide the helper for the infinitive [to get NA²⁷]. In favor of NA²⁷ and V¹, it is normal usage for this letter to have an infinitive obviously lacking its helper verb. In summary, the internal evidence is split; V² is the shortest and hardest reading, and can explain the NA²⁷ [after which perhaps the conjunction was lost by carelessness to derive V¹], but normal usage in the letter favors the other two options.

Overall: Though all three readings have early witnesses, the external evidence favors either NA²⁷ for character of witnesses or V¹ genealogical solidarity and geographical spread. The internal evidence favors V² for being the shortest and hardest reading, and being able to explain the NA²⁷ [after which perhaps the conjunction was lost by carelessness to derive V¹], but normal usage in the letter favors the other two options. This is a toss up, really, but the NA²⁷ is preferred [D] based on normal usage and its good early evidence.

Structural Layout of Greek Clauses

22 αἱ γυναῖκες [*] τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν

ὡς [*] τῷ κυρίῳ,

23 ὅτι ἀνὴρ ἐστὶν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς

ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς [*] κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας,

αὐτὸς [*] σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος·

24 ἀλλὰ

ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ,

οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες [*] τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντί.

25 Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπᾶτε τὰς γυναῖκας,

καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν

καὶ ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς,

26 ἵνα αὐτὴν ἀγιάσῃ

καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ῥήματι,

27 ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ ἑνδοξον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν,

μὴ ἔχουσιν σπίλον ἢ ρυτίδα ἢ τι τῶν τοιούτων,

ἀλλ' ἵνα ᾗ ἁγία καὶ ἄμωμος.

28 οὕτως ὀφείλουσιν [καὶ] οἱ ἄνδρες ἀγαπᾶν τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας

ὡς [*] τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα.

ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἑαυτὸν ἀγαπᾷ·

29 Οὐδεὶς γάρ ποτε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σάρκα ἐμίσησεν

ἀλλὰ ἐκτρέφει

καὶ θάλπει αὐτήν,

καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς [*] τὴν ἐκκλησίαν,

30 ὅτι μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ.

31 ἀντὶ τούτου καταλείπει ἄνθρωπος [τὸν] πατέρα καὶ [τὴν] μητέρα

καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ,

καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν.

³² τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν·

ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.

³³ πλὴν καὶ ὑμεῖς οἱ καθ' ἓνα, ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα οὕτως ἀγαπάτω

ὥς [*] ἑαυτόν,

ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἵνα φοβῇται τὸν ἄνδρα.

Synchronic Word Studies

5.23: κεφαλή: In the Septuagint, κεφαλή occurred 433 times, with meanings consistent with English usage, such as the physical head of a person or animal, the leader in authority over people, or the top of an object such as a mountain or pillar; or it might stand metaphorically for a person himself or that person's responsibility [LEH, s.v. #5087]. This was a narrowing of meaning from classical usage, which also included the source of a river, and figurative uses associated with a physical head such as wig, bust, and crown [LSJ, 945]. In contemporary Greek culture [MM, 342], we have attestation for physical head of a person or animal [PSI v.455¹² (AD178); P Lond 47⁸ (AD second century)] and the whole amount of land being purchased [P Oxy 11.273¹⁸ (AD95)].

In the New Testament, κεφαλή occurs seventy-five times [BibleWorks], and regardless of the meaning is almost always translated as “head” in the modern English translations. The non-Pauline uses overwhelmingly are referencing the physical head of a person or animal, though sometimes the head is in a vision which has a metaphorical meaning [e.g. Rev 17.9, where the physical heads seen in the vision are interpreted as mountains] or the head is used in a figure of speech which had a known meaning [e.g. Luke 21.28, where “raise your heads” (NET) is literally referring to physical heads, but carries the meaning of “pay attention”]. There are a couple of metaphorical uses, such as for “life” [Acts 18.6; see Lattke, EDNT, 2:284], “hair” [Acts 18.18, one use that sometimes is not translated as “head”], and referring to the “cornerstone” [Mat 21.42; Mark 12.10; Luke 20.17; Acts 4.11; 1 Pet 2.7; each quoting Psalm 117.22 from the Septuagint; see BDAG, 541-542].

κεφαλή occurs eighteen times in Paul's letters [BibleWorks], including three times in Ephesians. Eight times, Paul was referring to a physical head [Rom 12.20, a quote from Pro 25.21; 1 Cor 11.4, 5, 7, 10; 12.21; though the second occurrence in each verse of 1 Cor 11.4-5 might be considered to metaphorically refer to “life” or “self”]. In the remaining ten occurrences, Paul used the word to refer to a leader in authority. In Col 2.10, Christ is called the head of every [other] ruler and authority, clearly implying his leadership in authority over them, especially since the previous verse stressed his deity. Eph 1.21-22, supports this interpretation, as Christ is seen to be in authority over the [other] rulers and authorities of the world forever, because God the Father has subjected [see the following word study] all things under Christ's feet, and placed Christ as the head over all things, for the church. In 1 Cor 11.3, Christ is head of a man, man is head of a woman [presumably in marriage], and God the Father is head of Christ; this implies authority in the first and last relationship, which suggests it for the middle one. It also lays out a hierarchy: God the Father over Christ over man over woman [Lincoln, 369; Best, 534]. Some see a “source” meaning here [Bruce, 384], or “source” and “preeminence” [Best, 535], but “source” borders on dangerous Christology, and so is rejected.

In Eph 4.15; Col 1.18; 2.19, Christ is head of the body which is the church, and these verses have the greatest similarity to our subject verse, Eph 5.23. Eph 4.15 is not too revealing: Paul hoped believers

might grow to be like Christ, who is the head; and then he used a “church as body” metaphor to say the growth came from each part functioning as it should; Col 2.19 has a similar meaning. Some think there are connotations of “source” in these two verses [Lincoln, 369; possibly Best, 535; Hoehner, 739, who saw κεφαλή implying “preeminence” which included either authority or source depending on the context], but in these verses Christ is the source of the growth of the body, not of the body itself [and in the Colossians verse, even the growth is attributed to someone else, God the Father]. Col 1.18 also is not an elaborate description of this relationship, simply stating Christ is the head of the body, the church. Some see these passages as contrasting Gnostic redeemer myths [Schlier, TDNT, 3:680-681], but those myths would have come later and there is no indication of this problem in the context.

Eph 5.23 seems to elaborate, saying Christ is head over the church, [being] himself savior of the body. This could be taken as an implication that the husband is a protector or provider [Lincoln, 370; Bruce, 385; O’Brien, 414; Hoehner, 743], however the use of αὐτὸς in this verse emphasizes Christ, and in combination with the adversative ἀλλὰ which opens the next verse, it suggests that this elaboration is descriptive of only why Christ is considered head over the church, and does not relate directly to a husband’s headship over his wife [Lincoln, 370; O’Brien, 414-415; Best, 535], though the nature of Christ’s leadership will be relevant to the leadership of the man in the family. Also, though Paul contrasts man as head of the wife just as Christ is head of the church, he nowhere refers to the woman as the body of the man just as the church is the body of Christ, and nowhere in Scripture is anyone other than Jesus or God the Father referred to as a savior [O’Brien, 414-415; Hoehner, 742-743].

If we look at the literary context of Eph 5.22-24, we get a clear picture that here κεφαλή implies leadership with authority [Hoehner, 740]. But we must also consider the nature of Christ’s leadership, which is benevolent and sacrificially serving, as the rest of this passage makes clear is expected of the husband [Lincoln, 370; O’Brien, 414]. There is no implication from this headship that there is a qualitative difference between men and women before God [Hoehner, 740; O’Brien, 412]; in fact, even in some aspects of marriage the spouses are considered to have equal rights, such as in conjugal rights [Hoehner, 735, citing 1 Cor 7.2-4].

5.24: ὑποτάσσεται: In the middle-passive, this word in the Septuagint carried a meaning of being subject to, or submitted to, someone [LEH, s.v. #9258]. The word occurs thirty-eight times in the New Testament, twenty-five of those in Paul’s letters. The command for wives in relation to their husbands is repeated in 1 Pet 3.1; Col 3.18; Titus 2.5. BDAG’s analysis [1042] is that all New Testament uses mean to be subject or to be subordinated to something or someone else. For the middle-passive form, Burgmeier [EDNT, 3:408] elaborated further, including the concepts of being submitted, subordinated, yielded, or obedient.

In the contexts that do not involve believers, the idea of obedience and total submission seems evident: all things to Christ [Heb 2.8; 1 Cor 15.27-28; Eph 1.22; Phi 3.21]; angels and other powers to Christ [1 Pet 3.22]; the child Jesus to his parents [Luk 2.51]; Christ to God the Father [1 Cor 15.28; note this submission can be functional subordination without loss of dignity or status; O’Brien, 412]; demons to the seventy-two Christ sent out [Luk 10.17, 20]; and the church to Christ [Eph 5.24] are all good examples. Two negative examples also serve: the fleshly mind does not submit to God’s law [Rom 8.7] and non-believing Jews are not submitting to God’s way of righteousness [Rom 10.3].

In contexts that do involve believers, we might get some illumination as to the form of this submission. Slaves are to submit to their masters [1 Pet 2.18; Titus 2.9]; the young in the church are to submit to their elders [1 Pet 5.5]; believers are to submit to God [James, 4.7; Heb 12.9], to those laboring for God in the church [1 Cor 16.16], to human authorities [Rom 13.15; 1 Pet 2.13; Titus 3.1], and to each other [Eph 5.21]. Most of these suggest the same obedience and total submission. However, a couple of these relationships, most notably that in Eph 5.21, raise questions about whether this is always total submission or sometimes just humble subordination, which would still involve yielding place to the other, but not necessarily a slave to master relationship. However, if the submission in 5.21 is illustrated fully by 5.22-6.9, it too is apparently hierarchical in nature. Some think the command in 5.21 to submit to one another means to submit to those whom you should within the church structure [Hoehner, 717].

In Col 3.18 and Titus 2.5, the instruction is simply for wives to submit to their husbands. However, Peter said slaves should submit to their masters even if those masters were not reasonable [1 Pet 2.18], and then said in the same way wives should submit to their husbands [1 Pet 3.1]. Eph 5.22 [with the verb implied from 5.21], says wives are to submit to their husbands as to Christ, and Eph 5.24 says wives are to submit to their husbands as the church submits to Christ. This certainly implies obedience and total submission [Hoehner, 746; Lincoln, 373], as unpalatable as that might be in today's culture, particularly by the last phrase, ἐν παντί. It implies the man ruling over the family [benevolently, ideally], the wife living by his standards and values, and the union between husband and wife being so close that they function together in unity [Lincoln, 372; O'Brien, 416-417].

Ideally, the woman should benefit from the man's leadership of the family as the church benefits from Christ's leadership [Hoehner, 745; some believe this is directly relevant, as an attribute of the church's submission, such as Lincoln, 372, and O'Brien, 417]. That might not be prerequisite for submission [O'Brien, 418]; but some think this submission is intimately tied to the husband's instructions to love which follow, and so the submission is to a husband who has her welfare constantly in view [Lincoln, 373]. In any case, a wife would not submit to her husband in anything sinful [Hoehner, 745; O'Brien, 418; Best, 538], and some believe that includes being on the receiving end of abuse [Hoehner, 745]. Some consider this to be a middle form of the verb, instead of the passive, implying that as the church must choose to submit to Christ and is not forced, so submission is the wife's choice in obeying scripture, not that the husband may subject her willfully [Hoehner, 731, 746; O'Brien, 411, 416-418; Lincoln, 372; though others, such as Delling, TDNT, 8:45, argue the middle can range from considerate submission through (forced) subjection]. This middle voice is most closely brought out by those translations that happen to choose submission as the translation, for they have written "submits" [NET; ESV; TNIV; CSB; NLT]. The next most common translation is "is subject" [NASB; NRSV; NKJV].

Problem-Solving and Validation

5.26: αὐτὴν ἁγιάσῃ καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ῥήματι: This purpose given here for Christ giving himself up in behalf of the church is unclear: whether Christ is consecrating or purifying the church, the sort of cleansing implied, the meaning of the metaphor of "the washing of the water," and how "the word" factors in are all questions that arise. What we can see is that the ultimate purpose of Christ's death and the ultimate result are that Christ presents the church to himself as glorious, without any impurity, perfectly holy and blameless [5.27].

The first thing to consider is the participle's relationship to the main verb, because this will have an impact on how we interpret both verbs. Some see this participle as temporal antecedent [NASB; ESV], but that is less likely with the subjunctive also being aorist; so some view it as temporal contemporaneous [TNIV; in the NKJV possibly even attendant circumstance], but then there would be no relation between the verbs other than simultaneity [Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 623-624], which does not seem to fit here. Because the participle is aorist, it cannot be result [Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 638]; it could be purpose, but that is rare for an aorist [Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 636]. Some think this is a participle of means [O'Brien, 422; NET; NRSV; Hoehner, 752, agreed with means, but his resultant translation was like NASB]. In that case, the participle almost always will define the action of the main verb such that the main verb is more explicitly understood [Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 629]: accepting this as a participle of means implies καθαρίσας must make ἁγιάσῃ more explicit.

The verb ἁγιάζω apparently was coined by Greek-speaking Jews from the adjective form to avoid the Greek verbs which then were associated with technical pagan concepts [MM, 4]. In the Septuagint, ἁγιάζω occurs 196 times, primarily with two basic meanings: to set aside for God's purposes; or to purify [LEH, 9]; though it is interesting to note that Lincoln [375] blended the two meanings: setting apart to effect a purification. In the New Testament, the verb occurs twenty-five times [BibleWorks], seven times in Paul's letters other than this lone occurrence in Ephesians. BDAG [9-10] offers four definitions: to set aside things for ritual purposes; to consider a person holy for cultic or moral purposes; to revere; or to purify. BDAG's second definition seems to combine the two meanings of the Septuagint usage, but [unlike Lincoln] not to connect the two, and it is further confusing that they separate purifying from moral

holiness. Some New Testament uses are obvious: Matt 6.9 is obviously reverence, regarding God's name in the Lord's prayer; 1 Thes 5.23 is obviously purification, as Paul prayed that God would make them holy [NET] so they would be blameless; 1 Cor 1.2 is obviously consecration, since they are not pure but are consecrated [though BDAG places this verse under purification]. Sometimes Paul seems to have both consecration and purification in mind, such as in Rom 15.16 [NET: "I serve the gospel of God like a priest, so that the Gentiles may become an acceptable offering, *sanctified* by the Holy Spirit"] and 2 Tim 2.21 [NET: "So if someone *cleanses* himself of such behavior, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart, useful for the Master, prepared for every good work"]. In Ephesians, Paul used the adjective form fifteen times, twice referring to the Holy Spirit [pure], nine times in a substantival use referring to believers [consecrated]. In 1.4, God chose [consecration] believers to be holy [purity]; in 2.21, Christ is growing the church into a holy temple for God, which growth implies purification but not without consecration; in 3.5, the apostles and other prophets are called holy [consecration]; in 5.27, it would seem the church is to be pure; and in 5.3, though referring to "saints" and so consecration, there is purity in view. Perhaps Lincoln was correct to see the two concepts as inseparable: after all, once consecrated for God, one will be purified; if one is purified, he must be consecrated. Though many favor consecration as the meaning for this verb [Hoehner, 751, who sees consecration in all New Testament uses except in the Lord's prayer where it means reverence; O'Brien, 421; Balz, EDNT, 1:16], with the end result of purity in view, *ἀγιάζω* must here mean either "to purify" or "to consecrate with an end toward purification."

καθαρίζω occurs 125 times in the Septuagint, with meanings of "to purify," "to acquit," "to purge," and "to cleanse" [LEH, s.v. 4518]. In the New Testament, BDAG [488-489] breaks its meanings into three categories: physical cleansing, ritual cleansing, and healing of a disease causing ceremonial uncleanness. How we understand Paul's metaphor affects how we interpret this word in Ephesians, and thus how it makes an impact on the understanding of the verb *ἀγιάζω* preceding it. As a participle of means, if we take *καθαρίζω* to refer to a ritual cleansing here [BDAG], then this would make a case for *ἀγιάζω* meaning "consecrate" [with an end toward purification]; on the other hand, if we think Paul is simply using a visual and *καθαρίζω* represents physical cleansing in a metaphor [which could mean something else], then this would make a case for *ἀγιάζω* meaning "purify." Paul's other two uses of the *καθαρίζω* refer to believers cleansing themselves of defiling sinful actions [2 Cor 7.1] and Christ purifying for himself a people [Titus 2.14]. BDAG considers these ritual cleansings, Hoehner [752] called them examples of "moral cleansing," Bruce [388] considered this Christ acting as baptizer, but the emphasis is on actual purification. And if *καθαρίζω* has a purification connotation in our verse, that suggests a purification meaning for *ἀγιάζω*. Others argue for a meaning of consecration by removing the defilement of sin [Hoehner, 752; O'Brien, 422], but if that is the case, it must be a consecration with an end toward purification, especially given our context.

Some think "the washing of the water" refers to water baptism, thinking this seems the likely inference for the original readers, and that 1 Cor 6.11 includes a washing that likely refers to baptism and is linked with sanctifying as metaphors for salvation [Lincoln, 375]. However, there is not a strong context for water baptism at this point in Ephesians, there are no other New Testament references to a church as a whole being baptized in water, and others argue 1 Cor 6.11 has spiritual cleansing in view, not water baptism [O'Brien, 422; Hoehner, 753]. Some think this could be a reference to the Jewish custom of a bridal prenuptial bath, which in turn reflected Eze 16.8-14, in which God is said to have bathed Jerusalem with water, washing off the blood, and then to have anointed her with oil [consecration], all as part of entering their marriage covenant [Hoehner, 753-754; Lincoln, 375; O'Brien, 422-423; Bruce, 387]. Though some think such prenuptial baths were customary among Greeks also [Hoehner, 754], such a Jewish custom and such a remote Old Testament passage seem obscure references for the Gentile audience of Ephesians. In its only other New Testament occurrence [Titus 3.5], *λουτρόν* refers to a washing of regeneration, and is accompanied with a renewal by the Holy spirit, so there is consecration with purification. Some see this verse also as a reference to water baptism and its signification of inner washing [Bruce, 388], but there is not a clear reference to the liturgy or rite of water baptism in either of these verses and water baptism does not cleanse from sin [Hoehner, 753]. Referring to Heb 10.22, in which, because of Christ's death and intervening priesthood, believers can approach God, having had

their hearts cleansed and their bodies washed in water, Hoehner concluded that in Eph 5.26 washing referred to cleansing [754]. Considering the Titus passage and the meanings of ἀγιάζω and καθαρίζω derived above, it seems best to consider this a simple visual of the purifying cleansing accomplished by Christ. Because of his knowledge of the Old Testament and its significance in his Jewish heritage, Paul might have had in mind a reference to the Jewish bathing ceremony, but understanding such a reference is not needed for the meaning of the passage to be clear.

Hoehner [755-756] and O'Brien [423] argued, based on Paul's usage of ῥήμα, that it refers to the gospel. However, close analysis weakens their argument, for they said that except in 2 Cor 13.1 [which is a quotation of Deu 19.15 in the Septuagint], Paul used this term to refer to words from God or Christ. It is true that in Rom 10.8, ῥήμα is the word of faith they are preaching; and in Rom 10.17-18, it is the word of Christ that leads to faith, but this latter usage is due to v.18 also being a quotation from the Septuagint, Psalm 19.4; and the meaning in 2 Cor 12.4 is that Paul's words would be inadequate to relate what he had heard; and the meaning in Eph 6.17 is not clear. Bruce [388] thought the term referred to the believer's confession of faith, which he tied to water baptism and Paul's experience in Acts 22.16, but that seems farfetched in the present context. If we believe Paul is talking here about Christ purifying his church, then we could consider this to be the gospel or, more broadly, all of scripture; if consecration with an end goal of purification is in view, the likely meaning is the gospel. Some think ἐν ῥήματι modifies ἀγιάσει, making the intervening clause parenthetical, but it seems strange to separate the verb and its modifier by the intervening phrase [Hoehner, 756]. Some think ἐν ῥήματι modifies τῷ λουτρῷ, indicating some word is associated with the washing with the water, but normally an article would precede ῥήματι in that case, and this would imply a baptism ritual [Hoehner, 756-757]. It seems best to think ἐν ῥήματι modifies καθαρίσας [Hoehner, 757].

Given these resolutions, the best tight translation might be as follows: "...in order that he might sanctify [consecrate for the purpose of purifying] her by cleansing [purifying] her with the washing of the water by the Word, in order that he might present the church to himself as glorious..."

5.32: τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν: The question here primarily is to what μυστήριον refers, and then consequently how this clause relates to the next one in the sentence and how the sentence relates to the following one in 5.33.

In the Septuagint [and its apocrypha], μυστήριον referred to three types of things [LEH s.v. 6076]: human secrets [Tob 12.7], secret cultic rites [Wis 14.15], or divine mysteries about God's plans or purposes [Dan 2.28]. There is evidence from contemporary culture that the word was used to refer to pagan secret doctrines for the initiated, ranging from mid-second century BC through the first century AD [MM, 420]. In the New Testament, the word occurs twenty-eight times, twenty-one of them in Paul's letters [BibleWorks]. All the New Testament uses refer to divine mysteries of God's plans or purposes, which are revealed by God in his timing [with the possible exception of 2 The 2.7, which might just mean "secret"]. There are several instances where μυστήριον refers to Christ and his gospel [e.g. Eph 1.9; 6.19] and a few of those include the revelation about Gentile inclusion [Eph 3.3-4, 9; Col 1.26-27]. This is largely consistent with the analysis of standard lexical works [BDAG, 661-662; Krämer, EDNT, 2:445]. So here Paul was referring to a secret of God's which God was now revealing.

Some view this mystery as the human marriage referred to in this context, which goes back to the Gen 2.24 scripture quoted here. Roman Catholic doctrine holds to this, viewing the marriage of a Christian man and a Christian woman as a grace-giving sacrament [due to the Vulgate's translation of this Greek word into Latin], on the basis of it being the reenactment of the marriage of Christ to the church [Hoehner, 776-777; O'Brien, 430; Lincoln, 381]. However, this seems to be based on later Gnostic influence in the church [Hoehner, 777] and certainly reflects translation problems. It also implies a typological connection as discussed below. Other supporters of this view tie the Gen 2.24 quotation to the one-flesh, one-body, discussion in this passage and note that this Old Testament quotation immediately precedes our subject verse [O'Brien, 430]. One problem with this is that μυστήριον usually refers to a recent revelation of God, not one given thousands of years earlier [O'Brien, 431], though there is no doubt that Gen 2.24 was a revelation in Moses' day, as to why marriage is important.

Some view this mystery as being marriage, Christ's union with the church, and the typological relationship between the two concepts. They see Paul applying Gen 2.24 to the mystery of the union of Christ and the church [Hoehner, 780; O'Brien, 429; Bruce, 395], but there is no need to see this in the text: Paul said the husband loves and nourishes his wife as he does his own body, his own flesh [like Christ does for the church, his body]; then Paul brought in Gen 2.24 because that adds support for the wife and husband being one flesh; then Paul reflected on the mystery of Christ's relationship for the church, before returning back to husband and wife. There is no need to see Gen 2.24 applied to Christ and the church; some proponents themselves admit that only the second half of the quotation is useful for this purpose [O'Brien, 430; Lincoln, 380]. If we do see a connection, it might be only in a loose illustrative way. Within the typological school of thought, some think the mystery includes the relationship of Christ and the church being reflected in a truly Christian marriage [O'Brien, 432, 434]. Their argument is based on the idea that the Gen 2.24 quotation refers to the church being members of Christ's body in 5.30, that Paul's argument uses Christ's relationship with the church to illustrate marriage, and that the Old Testament used marriage to depict the covenant relationship between Israel and God [O'Brien, 432-435]. In this case, the next clause might indicate that Paul was interpreting this in a way contrasted to a popular view [Lincoln, 382], though there is no indication this is the case; or that Paul's digression into human relationships was primarily because those relationships reveal Christ's relationship with the church [O'Brien, 434], but that seems to go contrary to the theme that Paul was using Christ's relationship to the church to illustrate marriage in this application part of the letter.

It seems best to see this mystery as the union of Christ and the church. The objection that this does not account for the marriage discussion and its relation to Christ and the church [O'Brien, 432] is not valid: the connection between marriage and the relation of Christ to the church is evident in 5.25-29 without using Gen 2.24 to illustrate that connection. As mentioned above, this view sees the passage thus: Paul said the husband loves and nourishes his wife as he does his own body, his own flesh [like Christ does for the church, his body]; then Paul brought in Gen 2.24 because that adds support for the wife and husband being one flesh; then Paul reflected on the mystery of Christ's relationship for the church, before returning back to husband and wife. If this is an application section of the letter, relating to being filled by the Spirit and thus submissive to one another, then there is no need to see Paul theologically stressing the work of Christ here, except as it is useful for illustrating the application. The only question then is why 5.32 is injected into the discussion at all, but likely it was just an aside, a meditative and philosophical reflection by Paul, before he resumed his argument. The context points to this interpretation, as the next clause makes it clear: ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. With δὲ, Paul got the readers' attention, suggesting that if they were thinking along the lines of the previous verse, human marriage, then they needed to stand corrected. In the following verse, he redirected them back to the human relationship, with πλὴν, translated as "Nevertheless."