

January 6th, 2008 “To Love and To Cherish”

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Philippians 2:1-4

1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

In our last discussion, we dealt at length with the twin commandments, in **Ephesians 5:22, 25:**

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

I tried to make the argument that, as counterintuitive as these commandments may seem in our liberal age, the content of these Biblical statements is straightforward and clear.

Since these commandments conflict with the sentiment of the times, we, as the people of God, should recognize that it is the sentiment of the times, rather than the Bible, which is incorrect.

This is an important understanding to have. Every generation has the opportunity to duplicate the experience of the Israelites, who stood on the riverbank opposite the Promised Land and listened to Moses as he expounded the Law of God to them. The Israelites were charged with going into the Promised Land, which was inhabited by pagan kingdoms, to destroy the pagans and establish a nation-state based upon the Word of God. Moses charged the Israelites, in **Deuteronomy 30:11-20:**

11 “For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off.

12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’

13 Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’

14 But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

15 “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil,

16 in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.

17 But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them,

18 I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess.

19 I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;

20 that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

We are not going into the Land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but each of us has our own personal kingdom to establish in this free country in which we live. However, if we decide to slay the Canaanites and Philistines of the contrary ideas with which we are surrounded and follow the commandments of God, we must, as did the Israelites, go against the culture of our times, which portrays marriage as a battleground between husband and wife for control of the home.

I spoke a couple of weeks ago about a man who endeavored to get help from his counselor because he and his wife were using argument as their primary form of communication. The counselor advised the man to stop arguing with his wife, stop trying to put himself in the dominant position and his wife in the subordinate position, stop trying to compete with his wife as if they were immature siblings each trying to be the one that Daddy and Momma loved the most. Competition between spouses for position is analogous to sibling rivalry, the differences being that spouses are not siblings and that Momma is not the one that can settle the dispute as to which one is the more loved.

What causes married couples to go into this rivalry for position? Why do we argue and fight with one another? Understand that our circumstances do not make us argue and the conditions do not make us fight. That which makes us fight is our feelings.

Remember the marriage vows that we reviewed last week?

I take you to be my wedded spouse, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God’s holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge you my faith.

The essence of the vow, removing all of the adjectives and all of the descriptive phrases, is, *I take you to be my wedded spouse to love and to cherish.* When you marry, you are specifically pledging that you will love and cherish this particular person.

It is inherent in human nature to desire the feeling of love. The reason for the existence of sibling rivalry is that the siblings feel that there is only a certain amount of love available, and they each want their share, or maybe more than their share.

Love is like any other commodity; when there is not enough to go around, people compete for it. With goods and services in the marketplace, people compete by paying more for commodities, and we see prices rise. When there is a scarcity of the emotional commodity of love, people compete by arguing and fighting with one another for the love that is available.

We remedy the scarcity of a commodity by producing more of it; we can remedy a scarcity of love by producing more love. The Word of God, if we follow it, can lead us to produce more love. **Philippians 2:1-2**, tells us:

1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

The spirit of marriage is the thinking process that gets husbands and wives on the same page, causing them to be like minded, to be of one accord, of one mind. That is why having limerance, the temporary feeling of passionate connection that we feel when we meet someone that we find, as they say in the vernacular, hot, is not a good criterion for picking a spouse.

To become like-minded, to be on one accord, of be of one mind with one another requires the use of the mind, i.e. thinking and decision making, rather than emotion. Like-mindedness is not the function of impulse or instinct; like-mindedness is not the function of emotional or physical attraction; like-mindedness is the function of a calculated assessment requiring intelligent consideration and intentional commitment.

Listen to the rest of the text. **Philippians 2:3-4** says:

3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Can you see that if husbands and wives decide to focus on the desires and interests of their spouse rather than just their own interests, and if husbands and wives decide to have more esteem for the desires of their spouses than of their own, that like-mindedness between the spouses will develop?

Like-mindedness is the opposite of egoism. Nothing can kill a relationship quicker than an egotistical spouse. Consider the writings of a young woman to her counselor:

“My husband and I got married when I was twenty-four and discovered I was pregnant. I told him upon our ‘agreement’ to get married that I was going to continue to work...and we were going to keep everything ‘separate and equal.’ I had my own checking account and he had his own. We even filed separate tax returns. There was no way I was going to be ‘dependent’ on any man. But after our little girl was born I came to the realization there I really did not want to go back to work and leave her with a sitter or in day care.

I didn’t come right out and tell my husband...how could I admit this ‘weakness’ and then on top of that be ‘dependent’ on him. So, instead, I became resentful and angry...I hated him for

existing. I hated the fact that I wouldn't have my own money because I thought that I wouldn't have any power in the relationship because I wasn't contributing financially to the household.

"I was going to be a mom and dependent on a man...everything I was indoctrinated against. I went back to college and obtained another degree...you see I needed a job where I could make good money, take care of my baby, and not be dependent on my husband. While in school I spent less time with my husband and daughter.

I was always angry and unhappy with my husband. My husband reacted to my anger with confusion at first, and then anger of his own, and our anger toward one another escalated. Finally, in the midst of an argument, he told me that he was tired of living like this and wanted a divorce.

As he left the house, I began planning for my divorce. I knew that I would have to get a job to make the money that my daughter and I would need to live, but I would then have to find someone to take care of my daughter while I worked, My daughter would be from a broken home, but I knew that I could manage somehow.

I called my mom to talk about the situation, and she asked me, "What happened? Has he had an affair? Is he spending the money on wine, women and song? Or has he lost his job? Has he done something so that the police looking for him? Has he hit you? What is going on?"

I told her, "No, he isn't doing any of that. We just can't get along."

"But why? You fell in love, you got married, you made a child with his man. What is he doing that is so terrible that you can't live with him." asked my mother.

"Mom, I didn't say that I wanted the divorce. He wants the divorce." I told her

"But why? Men don't want divorces without a reason. There has to be a reason somewhere. Tell me what it is." Mom said.

"Maybe he just lost his temper after an argument. I don't know." I told her.

"Dear", my mother said, "my granddaughter can't be from a broken home unless there is a good reason. You can't get a divorce from your husband and your husband can't get a divorce from you unless one of you has a good reason. You two can have arguments and lose your tempers, but that is not a reason to divorce. You have to have a reason. He has to be doing something to you that makes you want a divorce. What is it?"

Finally, I said, "Mom, I just want to be on my own. I want my own money. I want my own life. I want to be able to do what I want to do without asking him. I don't think that a man should control me."

"Yeah", said my mother. "That's what I figured, after you couldn't tell me anything bad that he was doing to you. You just want to be on your own. But, dear, that's a hard life. Being on your own is no picnic, especially with a baby.

"When you go back to work, you won't be able to do what you want to do. You'll have to do what the boss tells you to do. After work, you'll have to do what the baby needs you to do. And not only will you be on you own, you'll be alone. No man will ever be good enough for you. You have a man that isn't doing anything bad and he's not good enough. You'll be on your own, alone, forever.

"Think back to when you were single. You didn't want to be alone; you wanted to get married. Now you're married and you say that you want to be alone, you want to be single and you want your own way, but you will have a boss on a job and the responsibility for a baby.

Somebody is going to tell you what to do either way. Do you want it to be your boss, who doesn't really care about you and will replace you if you give him trouble, or your husband, who loves you and puts up with you? Think about it. Are you still sure that divorce is your best decision?"

"No, mom", I said, "I guess not."

"Dear", Mom said, "we are all disappointed sometimes when we can't have our way, but now you have a baby. Now you have a marriage. Now you have responsibilities. It is time for you to be the grownup. You can't pout like a little kid any more. You are a wife and a mother, and you hold the lives of your child and your husband in your hand. It is your job to make them happy and to make them a home. You have to stop thinking about yourself and think about them now.

"If you had a job, you'd have to think about your boss and your customers. How could it possibly be better having a stranger for a boss and some people off the street for customers than having your very own husband, who loves you, as your boss and your own very child, who came from your body and loves you, as your customer? Take care of the job that you have at home, and forget about getting another job that is harder and gives you less satisfaction. If not, you'll be on your own and you won't like that either."

After I listened to my mom, and thought about what she said, I decided to grow up. My priorities changed. I realized that my behavior and attitude toward my husband wasn't God directed—I was going to break up my marriage and my daughter's home in the name of my independence...because of my stupid pride.

"So, I decided to change. Now, I love my husband...I love my children...and I am learning to love being 'dependent' on him. He loves me, and he is a good boss. I pray that I can be a better example for my daughter and son. Talking with my mom turned me into the woman that my friends and I were trying to liberate during our rallies in college...and I am so very glad."

What is love? **Philippians 2:3-4** says:

3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

As I mentioned in our last lesson, Biblical love, the product of the spiritual growth of a person in a Biblically based marriage, is defined as a set of outwardly focused, character based actions. **1Corinthians 13:4-8** describes:

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8 Love never fails.

A person exhibiting Biblical love has decided to be patient with, kind to, not envious of, not rude with, and not easily angered by, the object of their affection. Biblical love understands that the nature of a mature love relationship requires perseverance and an outward focus.

The essence of marriage is other-directedness. **Romans 14:19** tells us:

19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

God created men and women to be different, anatomically, biologically, physiological and intellectually, Men and women think differently, enjoy different things, have different strengths, different weaknesses, and different points of view by the design of God.

The fact that men and women have different intellectual and emotional strengths is by the design of God. Let me repeat that, in case you didn't hear me the first time. The fact that men and women have different intellectual and emotional strengths is by the design of God.

The fact that we have different attributes and different strengths and weaknesses is not intended to be a matter of pride for either men or women; God has designed us with different strengths and weaknesses so that we might be able to work better with one another to accomplish the task of creating a home and a family.

Men's strengths are not superior to women's strengths nor are women's strengths to men's, just as an engine is not superior to a transmission in a car. Both engine and transmission are needed to make the car run, and neither part enables the car to serve its' purpose without the other. **1Corinthians 12:4-7, 11** tells us:

4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

Looking out for the interests of others allows us to see the benefit of our spouses' differing perspectives, the benefit of our differing strengths and weaknesses, and the fact that we need each other to create the environment in which our God-given task can be completed.

For example, men and women have different physiology as it pertains to marital relations. Men produce the cells that are their physical contribution to conception within a fluid medium on a daily basis, and the fluid involved is stored in the man's body. There is a size constraint upon the place in which this fluid is stored, and thus men have the conscious, biological requirement to release this fluid on a regular, periodic basis. By contrast, women do not produce these cells as do men, but are born with all of the cells that can become their contribution to conception. Storage space is not a consideration for women, because all of these cells are stored in the woman's body from birth, and released on a monthly basis by an automatic physical process outside of the conscious control of the woman.

In the normative case, men seek to perform the activity of releasing their contribution to conception with more urgency than do women, who do not share the urgency of men because they do not have the storage constraint that men have.

The difference in genders is by the design of God, and is not a matter of gender superiority or inferiority, but a matter of gender difference.

God designed marriage to deal with both the activity of conception, and the difference in physiology and in urgency to participate in the act of conception between men and women. He tells Adam and Eve in **Genesis 2:24**:

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

As well as the like-mindedness, being of one accord and of one mind to which our text in Philippians refers, the reference to becoming one flesh in Genesis also refers to the physical process leading to conception that I have just described. God first commands that men and women only participate in that process with one another if they are husband and wife. Then, God goes on to clarify, that because of the biological difference in motivation to participate in the process between husband and wife, that the marital commitment is a commitment to participate in the process, regardless of the urgency or the lack of urgency that either spouse feels.

1 Corinthians 7:2-5 records:

2 Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

3 Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.

4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

5 Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Self-control is an issue because of the biological difference in men and women. If we both had a capacity problem with our physical contributions to conception, or if neither of us had the capacity problem with our physical contributions to conception, our desire to participate in the process would be on roughly the same frequency, and the problem of self-control would not be an issue, as it is not for the lower animals. Since the biological differences exist in human beings, God has given us intelligence, by which we can override our biological urges or lack of the same, and participate in the process which brings relief to the male, not because of biology, but because of a commitment to follow the mandate of **Philippians 2:4**, to not only look out for our own interests, but also for the interest of others, namely, our partner, as the text tells us.

The fact that husbands have the capacity constraint and feel the biological urgency to participate in the process and that wives do not share this urgency also explains God's decision to give the husband the authority to direct the frequency of the process. **Ephesians 5:22-24** says:

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Although husbands are given the authority by God to direct the frequency with which the couple participate in the creative process, the husband is under the constraint of God to provide an environment for his wife that will make her participation in this process, as well as all other marital processes, pleasurable. **Ephesians 5:25-33** records:

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Our text calls for cooperation, rather than selfishness, and concern about the desires of our spouse from both husband and wife as we meld our lives together both intellectually and spiritually as well as physically. **Philippians 2:4** says:

4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

The Bible then goes on to invoke a remembrance of the activities of our primary Spiritual leader, Jesus Christ, as a rationale for the selflessness with which we ought interact with one another. **Philippians 2:5-11** says:

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Then, we are instructed as to how we should carry out this sacrificial mandate.

Philippians 2:14-16 says:

14 Do all things without complaining and disputing,

15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

We are all on a sacrificial journey to emulate the demeanor and attitude of Jesus Christ.

We are given the difference in physiology with one another to facilitate the conscious giving of ourselves to the marital process, and in so doing, emulating the obedience of the Christ, who gave Himself that our sins might be forgiven. Without sacrifice, there is no ultimate glory.

Had it not been for the Cross, there could have been no resurrection and no ascension into heaven. Without labor, there is no reward.

Jesus instructs us to give ourselves to the commandments and to one another so that He can inhabit our homes and make them places of peace. He pledges to be with us, as we love one another by meeting one another's needs and desires, and in so doing, show our love for Him by keeping His commandments. He tells us, in **John 14:23-31**:

23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.

25 "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you.

26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all

things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

28 You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I.

29 "And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe.

30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.

31 But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here.

Arise, let us go from here, with a determination to love one another; as Jesus has loved us, so we must love one another. By this all men will know that we are Jesus' disciples, because we have love for one another. Let us each look out not only for his or her own interests, but also for the interests of others, particularly that of our spouse. Let us love and cherish one another.

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