

The Christian Life
Part 5a
The Logic of Submission
Christ's Love for the Church

Eph 5:18-32

- 18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;
20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;
21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.
22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.
23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.
24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.
25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;
26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,
27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.
28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.
29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:
30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.
31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.
32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. KJV

Introduction:

I realized as I have thought over this section of Ephesians again and again over the past weeks that the subject is very large and cannot be properly covered in one message. The weather conditions today have put us in the situation of needing an abbreviated service. So, I have done what I should have done from the beginning and that is split the topic into at least two sections.

Today is our Holiday Meal Sunday and it stands between the two large winter celebrations of our culture, Thanksgiving and Christmas. When I think of it, I wonder if Christmas should not be renamed Thanksgiving and Thanksgiving called Harvest Celebration. Indeed many things are called to our minds at Thanksgiving for which we owe deep and profound gratitude to God and it is good to have a time set aside to remember those things and express again our indebtedness to Him for His goodness to us.

But Christmas, at least traditionally, is the time that we celebrate the coming of our Savior into the world to redeem His people from their sins. Beyond all doubt and, I think, all argument, there is nothing that has ever occurred, nothing that God has ever done, for which human beings ought to be more Thankful than this Wonderful Act of our Loving God.

I want to call your attention this morning to the Redeeming Work of Jesus Christ and I have two primary motives in mind for doing so. First of all, I really want you to be grounded in an understanding of What He Did so that you will be encouraged to go deeper in your worship of Him and grow in grace. Secondly, I want you to see the logic by which the Apostle Paul used this Wonderful Work to be the foundation principle for the interactions of people with one another.

We should notice that all of the things that Paul said after Eph. 5:18 are things that flow out of the state of being filled with the Spirit of God. Paul took a large section of this little letter to discuss the concept of “submission” and to carefully connect it to the love that Christ had for the Church.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

The kind of love that Paul is talking about here and the basis of submission is a love that drives one person to a sacrificial commitment to the welfare of another.

I read a story not long ago written by a young man who professes to be a Christian. He had deliberately entitled the short piece, “Marriage is not for me,” to intrigue potential readers. In this short piece, he talked about his experience of falling in love and getting married to a wonderful young woman. He talked about the excitement of the romance, the thrill of the wedding and the wonderful time the two of them had for the first few weeks of their marriage.

But, it was not long until he began to grow dissatisfied and unhappy. Marriage as a way of life was not what he had expected. He found that he was not enjoying this life of being all harnessed up with another person, wonderful as she was, who has her own set of wants and needs, many of them requiring that he sacrifice his own desires and many of them creating more work than he had expected.

He carried his problem to an older gentleman who had been married for many years. When he described his frustrations and unhappiness, the older man had the audacity to laugh at him. “Marriage isn’t about you,” the experienced husband told him, “your life is now about caring for and providing for someone else.” “You must get over yourself and realize that this whole thing was never designed nor intended to focus on you, your wants, or even your needs. It’s about someone else.”

Thankfully the young husband took the advice to heart, re-examined his motives, his selfishness, and his foolishness. He then found joy in seeking to provide joy for his beloved wife.

The love of Jesus Christ pushed Him to commit an unthinkable act. Who ever envisioned that the Creator might become a creature? How far would He be required to go? What humiliation would He be required to endure? Was it even possible for the Infinite to become finite?

But He had a cause. He had a people that He loved, that He cherished, that He longed after with all of the passion possible for a Being Who in all things is Infinite. Where could, where would, Infinite Love carry the Infinite God?

He is known to us as *Savior*, but that word is not about Him so much as it is about what He did for us who are members of His Church. He loved enough to do a Work that was about someone else and focus all of His love and attention on them.

Think about it, the gods of the pagans (and the ‘God’ of many so-called ‘Christians’) are the center of a system that is all about *them*. “Bring me gifts, give me sacrifices, keep my rules, honor my shrines, be my slaves.... and I will consider doing some small thing for you,” they seem to say, “refuse me and I will destroy you.”

The God of Grace, the Lord of Heaven, is, however, known for loving and acting first. “For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son...” Jesus said to Nicodemus.

I will not submit to an idol or some false “God” who demands things from me.... or at least his “priests” say that he does. But this kind of love, to be My Savior, I will willingly submit to that. And, this is what Paul is laying as a foundation for his teachings here in this portion of Ephesians.

I would be a fool not to be thankful and incredibly small in my thankfulness if I was unwilling to submit to Him.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Those words “gave Himself for it (the Church)” are an example of how an enormous act of love can be covered in just four words.

“Gave Himself?” Oh, did He ever give Himself. Look at just a few passages that describe what He did.

Phil 2:5-11

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under

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

He 'gave Himself' in the loss, for a time, of His standing as God. He 'gave Himself' by emptying out of Himself all that was necessary to become a man. He 'gave Himself' by take to Himself the humiliations of humanity. He 'gave Himself' by taking a status in life against which millions have rebelled, the role of a slave, a bond-servant. He 'gave Himself' by giving Himself to death, against which men strive and war. He 'gave Himself' by giving Himself to death on the cross.

***It is on this basis that submission is called for , ordered, and proclaimed. “SO THAT* at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tong will confess.”**

And, again, I have no problem with submission to that kind of love.

Consider again.

1 Peter 2:24

24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. KJV

“Bare our sins in His Own body.” Who can fathom the territory covered by those words?

We as humans are sometimes called upon to do some pretty nasty and disgusting things for one another. We tend to children until they are old enough to tend for themselves. We tend to the sick so they can be will again. We tend to those who cease to be able to do things for themselves. And, we tend to the dying so long as they need us. In the process of all of that we sometimes must do things that we would never ever truly desire to do. We clean up messes. We humble ourselves as servants and do what must be done.

But who can imagine the stench and filth of our sins? And who can imagine taking such a stinking load of filth upon ourselves?

There is no unclean, nasty, rotten, putrefying thing in our world that is as disgusting to us as sin is to the Holy God. Yet our Savior, in love, in His longing to see us healed and righteous, bore every ounce of that burden and died carrying it, died ***because*** He was carrying it, in order to give us life.

Tyrants I have no submission for. I may obey their laws out of love for God but I will not bow to the authority of dictators and politicians with runaway powers. But One Who would plunge the depths of hell itself and bear my sins all the way to death in satisfaction of His Own Infinite Justice? I will bow in submission to Him.

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

There are people who obsess over their own appearance. There are parents who obsess over the appearance of their children. There are husbands who obsess over the appearance of their wives. Usually, if not always, there is some selfishness in such obsessions. Often there is much selfishness. We want those who are identified with us to look good so that we can look good (?).

But Jesus desire purity, holiness, spotlessness for us because that is what is best for us and that is what the Price He Paid is all about.

2 Cor 5:20-21

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

He (Christ) was made to be sin for us, He Who had never known sin. Can our feeble minds even grasp an ounce of the enormity of that? Is there any way that we can hold such a contradiction in our minds? Can we imagine what had to be done in order for this to be true?

And, in all of this, it was not so that He could have a trophy but so that we could be made as righteous as He is, that we might be 'in Him,' joined in a union so profound that our sins were made His, His death secured *our justification*, His resurrection would give us spiritual life, and His ascension would secure eternal communion with the Lord of Lords and King of Kings!

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

Christmas? No! Thanksgiving! And.... submission because we are thankful.

Here is the ground of our Gratitude and the Gratitude which is the Spring from which our Submission flows.

Please remember this when we look at people being submissive to one another next week.

We give thanks to God for Giving us His Son to be our Savior.