

WHAT?! Me Submit To Someone Else?

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I got an email from David Barnes yesterday, and he was telling me about a customer of his. Dave Barnes lives in England and he is an engineer, he is an inventor, fabricator, that type of thing. One of the things he does is he makes cages for cars for dogs to stay in, for cars that are custom made for it. And he said this customer come in to pick up a cage yesterday morning and she works for an organization that trains dogs for the blind. She told him that a new guide book just came out to tell them how to train dogs, what they can and cannot do. They are no longer allowed to say "no" to a dog because it might hurt its feelings.

Now, I do not know whether that came from our school systems that are saying do not tell your kids "no" or whether that is coming to our school systems as a result of that. But it is amazing. It is the same mentality throughout the world of Satan's attitude of not wanting to be told "no." And so now everyone, it seems, in the world does not want to be told no for any reason at all. It is also coming out in the way we are handling everything. In this present society, the thought of submitting to anything other than what we want and desire to do is repugnant to people in this world.

The police are being defunded and discarded. Laws are ignored. People are doing what seems right in their own eyes. In stark contrast, God is making for Himself a Family of sons and daughters who will submit to Him and to each other, to serve Him and to praise Him and to reign with Him in His Kingdom forever.

Please turn with me to Ephesians 5. The apostle Paul stressed the mutual duties of the members of the family—those between husbands and wives, between parents and children, and between masters and servants. He specifically restated the fifth commandment as applied to children's obedience to parents. Accepting other Old Testament family obligations, he stated that God's truth is to be taught in the home and that economic,

physical, and mental health, and proper education must be provided for its members.

Ephesians 5:17-21 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.

There is one technical point about verse 21 that I want to clarify before we proceed with our consideration of it, and that is that it should be submitting to one another in the fear of *Christ*. It is not a matter of translation but rather of manuscripts, and all the latest and the best manuscripts have here "in the fear of Christ," not in the fear of God. Of course it comes to very much the same thing, but it does give an additional emphasis to what the apostle Paul says, as we will see.

Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ is a statement that we must be very careful to take in its setting and its context. It is important so that we can truly understand what Paul is saying. What Paul is doing here is to continue what he has already been saying, and at the same time to introduce what he is going to say. It is a kind of link between what has gone before and what is to follow. In other words, it is a further illustration of what he has laid down as a fundamental principle in verse 18, "do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit." Paul is addressing men and women who are filled with the Spirit—he is addressing converted members of God's church.

Earlier, Paul told the Ephesians certain things about themselves that are inevitably true *if* they are filled with the Spirit, and here then is another. So we interpret this statement in the light of verse 18 with its exhortation to us to go on being filled with the Spirit. No one can possibly do what Paul tells us to do in this verse unless he is filled with the Holy Spirit. It is useless to go to the world and say, "submitting to one another in the fear of Christ." It is meaningless to them. Also, they do not have the Spirit that enables them to be able to carry it out. The world not only *does not* do that, the world *will not*

do it, the world *cannot* do it. This is a meaningless exhortation to anybody who is not filled with the Holy Spirit.

So Paul is continuing the two ideas he has in mind in verse 18, "do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; and be filled with the Holy Spirit." A man who is drunk is not going to submit himself to anybody, he is asserting himself without restraint. That is the characteristic of such a person. He is lacking control and especially in this respect, he is boasting and pleasing himself and thinks he is invincible and entitled to have his own way. He does not want to hear the word "no" ever.

If we are to submit ourselves to one another, we must be entirely different from those who are filled with wine, and who go to that excess, that dissipation. And on the other hand, we must be filled with the Holy Spirit. In a sense, it is a physical contrast to a spiritual principle. We are not to be filled with wine, that is, something that distorts our view and our minds, but we are to be filled with something that is spiritual—the Holy Spirit. That is the essential connection. That is the basic idea. We have to be unlike what we were. We have to be unlike the world and we have to be altogether different in our essential characteristics from men and women who still belong to that realm. We must be filled with the Spirit.

How do we show that? We manifest evidence of it in our relationship to God. As Paul points out, we show it in our worship.

Ephesians 5:19-20 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul says true Christians are filled with the Spirit and fellowship, to have meetings of happiness and joy. We are to express all that together in worship of God, in praise and adoration of Him. But he also says that we are to manifest the same Spirit in our dealings with one another, in the friendship and fellowship that we have with one another. So Paul is emphasizing his basic theme by showing that men and women who are filled with the Spirit are to show that characteristic in their dealings with one another. It is a responsibility. It is a duty that everyone in God's church has.

It is important that we understand exactly what Paul means because he is going to illustrate this truth in three respects. He lays down the principle and then he says, 1) Wives submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 2) Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 3) Servants be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh. These three are separate illustrations of this fundamental principle that should always govern the relationship of Christian people with one another, submitting to one another.

Notice that the way that Paul puts it confirms the connection of this verse with the immediate surrounding verses. You who are filled with the Spirit must therefore sing together, and submit yourselves one to another. It all ties together. It is not disjointed in any way in this set of passages.

But what does submitting yourselves to one another mean? A better translation perhaps would be "being subject to one another." The idea that Paul has in mind in view of the word he uses there is something like this. It is the picture of soldiers in a regiment, soldiers in a line under an officer. It involves organization, it requires being orderly, and the characteristics of a man in that position is this: That he is, in a sense, no longer an individual. He is now a member of a regiment, and all of them together are listening to the commands and the instructions that the officer is issuing to them.

When a man joins the Army, in a sense he is signing away his right to determine his own life and actions, and that is an essential part of his contract. When he joins the Army or the Air Force or the Navy or whatever it is, he no longer governs and controls himself. He must do what he is told. He cannot go on vacation when he likes, he cannot get up at an hour in the morning he likes. He is a man under authority and the rules dictate *to him*, and if he begins to act on his own and independently of others, he is guilty of insubordination and will be punished accordingly. This is the meaning of the word the apostle Paul uses.

So what he is saying amounts to this: That we who are filled with the Spirit are to behave voluntarily in that way with respect to one another. We are

members of the same spiritual regiment, we are units in this same great spiritual army, and we are to do *voluntarily* what every soldier is forced to do. We have to be willing—have a willing spirit, willing mind.

How does this work out in practice? It is not enough merely to use the words. These things have to be applied. As Christ put it to the disciples, "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them." So what does it involve? What does it mean to say that we have to submit and to subject ourselves to one another?

Negatively, it clearly means certain things. We must not be thoughtless. Most of the troubles in life and most of the clashes are because people do not think. Impetuous action is the greatest cause of clashes and disputes, and of unhappiness in the human realm. If only people thought before they spoke, or before they looked or before they acted. What a difference it would make! But the trouble with the natural man is that he does not think. And we are certainly seeing that in this world today with the idiocies that are coming out of these minds. He gets an idea and he expresses it, he has a feeling and he wants to put it into operation immediately, an impulse comes and he acts without thinking it through.

Putting it negatively, therefore, Paul is saying that the Christian must never be a thoughtless person, must not live that sort of instinctive, intuitional kind of life, as he has already told us at great length. The Christian is a person who is governed by truth, governed by principles. He is wise, as Paul mentioned in the negative of verse 17.

A wise person is one who thinks, he looks before he leaps, he thinks before he speaks, and he is governed by thought, by understanding, by meditation, by consideration. The minute he begins to think, he will discover another very important negative. That is, that he must not be selfish and self-centered. The real trouble with selfish and self-centered people is they do not think except of course about themselves. But this rarely means that they are thinking. They are acting like animals. A wild animal is always out for itself. It does not think, it acts according to its instincts. Generally, that is the trouble with the non-Christian. He is selfish and self-centered because he does not think about others. Or remember the apostle Paul's word and the illustration he suggests, to put it another way.

The Christian, while he is still an individual, must never be *individualistic*. The moment we are an individualistic, we are wrong. This principle, this characteristic of being individualistic, is impossible in any army. That is one of the first things that has to be overcome in a person who goes into the military. It can be a very painful process, but he must realize that he can no longer act as he did before. Maybe he was a spoiled child at home, never told no. The moment that he wanted something, he always got it. He was the ruler. But all that must stop. Children must not rule in the family. In the Army, he must submit to others. It would be impossible to run an army if it consisted of a series of people who were individualistic. All that must be submerged.

To express the matter in another way, we must cease to be self-assertive. Self-assertion is the very antithesis of what Paul is saying, "submitting to one another in the fear of Christ." A person who pursues that course is never self-assertive. Self is the root cause of all our troubles and Satan understood that fact at the very beginning, when he first tempted mankind. "Has God said that you must not eat this?" Has God told you "no"? Satan continued his deception with, "God did so because He knew you would be as gods. That's insulting to you. It's keeping you down. Don't submit to that, assert yourself." Self-assertion.

There has been a tremendous amount of trouble in the world because of self-assertion, and it has been a major cause of the two world wars, and it is the major cause of this third world war that we are in that is different from all the rest. They call it asymmetric. It can be national as well as individual. On the individual level all trouble springs out of the self, which is always anxious to have its own way.

Another way of putting it is to say that the Christian must never be *opinionated*. Because that again is another manifestation of self. The opinionated person is much more interested in his own reasoning and mind power, is always looking inward at himself. The way that he does this, of course, always betrays him. He exposes himself by being proud of his own knowledge because he really does not understand the subject about which he

knows very little. If he did it, it would humble him. But he is not really interested in the truth. He is interested in his relationship to it, his knowledge of it from his own perspective.

Opinionated people always cause irritations and clashes. No one likes conversing with them, and this in turn leads to another trouble. Such a person always tends to be dictatorial and to lord it over others. One more manifestation of self.

Turn with me to I Peter 5. Peter is addressing elders because this is the particular temptation that confronts a man who becomes an elder, who becomes a minister. He is a man with ability and he has elements of leadership in him. Therefore he is put in this position, and by reason of his eldership, he is particularly exposed to this danger.

I Peter 5:1-2 The elders who are among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you. . .

I have heard several people who have come from other groups complain that their ministers are like policemen. I am amazed how often I hear that from people, and have over the years. Well, John Ritenbaugh was very wise when he began the Church of the Great God as a family, and said we are going to *shepherd* the flock and that is what we have been trying to do ever since.

I Peter 5:2-3 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

There are to be none who lord over it in the church. Elders are to be examples to the other members. No exceptions there. It *must* be done, it is a duty of the ministry. It is always a danger of such men who are in the ministry, the clearer a man's ideas are, the more exposed he is to this temptation. But we must not fall into it. We must submit ourselves to one another. (And I can say, I am speaking to all of us, including myself, but I am not thinking that the ministry in the Church of the Great God has a

problem in this area, because those tend to be secret sins. And as far as I know, the ministry is doing the best that they can here.)

This theme can be illustrated almost endlessly. We can sum this up by putting it like this: The Christian must never be self-seeking. I have been explaining the manifestations of self-seeking. Self-centered thought always leads to self-seeking action. Then to work it out still further, because this man of the world whom Paul is contrasting to the Christian, is essentially self-seeking and self-centered. He is thoughtless and unconcerned with respect to others. He is so anxious about himself that he never has a moment for other people. He wants something, but it does not occur to him that somebody else might want or need it also. He does not realize that, because he is so self-centered and thoughtless and unconcerned with respect to the condition and needs of others, and the desires and the welfare of others, he will probably have the tendency to go further and will even tend to despise others and to treat them with a certain amount of contempt.

There is a fine illustration of this in I Corinthians. The evil I have been describing was the real trouble there. And that is why Paul had to write this 12th chapter about the church as the body of Christ. Those who were the more comely parts were despising those who were the less comely parts, and the less comely were jealous of the comelier because of their ostentation and their importance and the honor that was being paid them. Therefore, there was a fundamental failure to understand this principle.

The final way that we can put this negative consideration is to say that the person who is selfish, self-centered, individualistic, thoughtless, and self-seeking is almost invariably, at the same time, a person who resents criticism and is impatient of others' points of view. If I am proud of my opinion, then the fact that anyone would dare question it is a gross insult to me. Not to the truth but to me, and it is what I believe that matters. So this person resents criticism and is impatient of others' points of view. He does not want to hear them and of course resents them. He is hypersensitive.

What an extraordinary thing the self is, what a repugnant trait is self-centeredness. Notice the multiplicity of the symptoms, it affects the whole person's outlook, every part of him—his thinking, his emotions, his actions, and his will, everything is involved. Now look at this picture of this person

selfish, self-centered, opinionated, thoughtless, tending to be dictatorial, hypersensitive. That then is the negative way of interpreting the words, "Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ."

But what do Paul's words mean positively? They are, of course, the exact antithesis of what I have been describing. Be filled with the Spirit. This means that the eyes of your understanding are enlightened with respect to the truth. Your mind has been opened to truth and reality. What does that lead to? This is how it works, here is a solution to all our problems—personal problems, individual problems in relationships, in marriage, work, business, school. If you are right concerning this principle, you will solve, not only that problem, but many others as well. It is that important.

The Christian way looks like this: If the eyes of our understanding are truly enlightened, or opened, the first thing we learn is the truth about ourselves. How we really are, what we are truly like. That means that we realize that we are all hopeless. We are all sinners, every one of us. There is none righteous, no not one. We are *declared righteous* by Jesus Christ and the Father because of our relationship with Them, not on our own.

The person who sees that that is true stops bragging about himself immediately. He does not brag about his morality, his goodness, his good works, his good deeds, his knowledge, his learning, or anything else. Turn with me to I Corinthians 4. If we just knew and believed the truth about ourselves, these problems of relationships would begin to be solved. God's inspired written Word reduces us to the same level, every one of us, and whatever may be true of us individually, we are all reduced to the same level. Speaking of God's people in God's church, Paul expresses it well:

I Corinthians 4:6-7 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now, if you did not receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

The picture here is of a man bragging of his great mind, his great ability, and despising others. Wait a moment, Paul says. What are you so proud of? Have you produced that brain of yours? Have you generated it? Have you made it alive? You have not done any of those things. What do you have that you did not receive? Have you made the difference? Of course, you have not! Everything you have you received. It is a gift from God.

Some are proud of their good looks, but have they themselves produced them? Others are proud of their ability in some respect—in music, art, or in speech. But where did they get it? The moment we realize that all are gifts, we stop boasting. We stop being foolishly proud. Psalm 100:3 says, "Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves." It does not get any clearer than that. It is God through His Son who gives the gifts by the power of His Spirit. The world does the exact opposite. It grades people. It has its honors, its glittering prizes. And it looks at these things and these are everything to them and they are flushed with pride and with their success.

But Paul says we are not to be like that. That is being drunk with wine, in which is dissipation. That is a spiritual principle as well as a physical. Be filled with the Spirit, and if you are filled with the Spirit, you realize that all you have is given to you by God and you have nothing to boast about. Now, in any case, the Spirit will lead you to see this. That with all you have you are still very poor. You are still ignorant, you are still very fallible, and you still fail a great deal. That is, if you are like me, I am sure.

Paul tells the people in Corinth, you who are puffed up with your knowledge, what do you really know? But you are still babes in Christ. I could not feed you with meat. I could give you only milk because you are babes. And yet you are puffed up with your knowledge, is what the intent of what Paul is saying here. The way to solve these difficulties in relationships is to know the truth about ourselves, and the moment we begin to know this truth, we see that we are but babes, and we are only at the beginning—even if we have been in the church fifty years. It is still the beginning of an eternity.

The person who thinks that his head is packed full of knowledge, when he comes to face the truth, as it is found here in the light of the Spirit, feels that

he knows nothing and that he is just a beginner, a babe, that he is full of failures and faults. I Corinthians 10:12 says, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. Turn with me to Ephesians 4. But not only that we are members of one body. And this is an earlier theme in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, submitting to one another. Why? Because we are all like the different parts and members of a body. Paul introduced that idea at the end of chapter 1 and he worked it out in Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:11-16 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting [That is exactly what watching too much TV will do to you, as David was talking about in his commentary about the influence that the world has on us by constantly bombarding us with these politically correct beliefs.], but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effect of working by which every part does its share, causes growth in the body for the edifying of itself in love.

So it is important to realize and remember that not that you are just a part, but that you are part of a whole. Unity of the whole matters enormously and in this sense, more than the part when it comes to the church. That again, is a way of solving our problems. In other words, it will lead you always to consider the body and its good rather than just your own particular personal good.

A great deal of the troubles today is because we are too individualistic in our whole idea of salvation. Thank God it is individual as we must always emphasize, but we must not think of it individualistically, that is, selfishly. Now, people are always thinking of themselves and looking at themselves, and they come to the church of God to get something for themselves.

And look at this great thing into which we have been put. We are called by God. God puts us here, we have not done anything to receive that reward or anything like that. It is definitely a gift, that calling of ours. We do not attend Sabbath services solely for our own edification. We come to services to worship God in sincerity and truth as a whole, and to fellowship and encourage one another. The man in the army is not fighting for himself. He is fighting for his country and that is the principle. The moment we begin to realize all these things, we will be ready to forego our rights, our personal individualistic rights.

We must understand this conception of the church as the body of Christ and the great privilege of being just a little part or portion of it. Then we will not think primarily of our own rights. We will be interested in the development and the achievement and the advancement of the whole, of every other part, also. Our neighbor and the one who is next to him and so on. We look out for one another. We help one another. We encourage one another. That is going to be more important than it has ever been before. Maybe even in the history of man in the coming years.

So if this is not being manifested in your own personal family at home, how do you expect to fulfill this responsibility to the church? This responsibility, this duty begins in the home.

Together we see this great unity, this organic, vital unity of the whole. And when we see this, we do not worry any longer about our rights, or talk about them, what we deserve, or what we do. We are not always watching and guarding them.

Please turn over to I Corinthians 13. All the scriptures I am using today are very common scriptures to us. We are familiar with them. Put together like this, they become extremely powerful, helping us to be motivated to be the way we should be. I guess if it was an army presentation, you could say, "Be all that you can be."

A member of the body of Christ is always ready to listen and learn. We do not automatically reject things, we are patient and understanding, but we can go further. We are ready to suffer and ready even to suffer injustice if

necessary—for the sake of truth, for the sake of the cause, for the sake of the body.

I Corinthians 13:4-8 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

So I ask you to take these verses here and make them a checklist. Just go through them and ask yourself, "Am I doing all these things or not doing what it says not to do?" That is what Paul tells us to put into practice when he says submitting to one another in the fear of Christ. Do not be puffed up. Do not boast. Do not be suspicious. Get rid of self. Be filled with love, belief. Hope all things. Be patient and long suffering.

Now flip over to Galatians 5. More familiar scriptures, but very powerful. This can be summarized by putting it like this. The only person who can submit himself to another in the fear of God and Christ is the person who is filled with the Spirit. Because the person who is filled with the Spirit is a person who produces, displays, the fruit of the Spirit, and by their fruits you shall know them.

Galatians 5:22-26 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Another checklist for us to add to the one we just read in I Corinthians 13.

If we are full of those characteristics, we will handle difficulty properly. We submit ourselves readily, willingly, voluntarily, always for the sake of others and for the good of the whole cause. The only ones who can do this are those who are producing the fruit of the Spirit *because* they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now flip over to I Corinthians 14, please. This shows itself in an endless number of ways. Let me give you one practical illustration here.

I Corinthians 14:29-31 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

Keep in mind that the word prophecy is a broad term. It does not just mean prophesying about or revealing what is coming. It also means just preaching in general at times and that type of thing. But whether it is the prophesying for the future or preaching, it applies both ways.

I Corinthians 14: 31-33 For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

What does that mean? The trouble with Corinth was this: A man rose to his feet and began to speak. He was so full of himself and felt that he alone had the truth, that he went on and on and on. But another man had a truth and he wanted to speak. But the first man would not give way to him. Paul says that is wrong. "But," says the first man, "I can't help myself." But Paul says, "Yes, you can. Control yourself. And when you see that other man has something to say, and you have had your opportunity, stop and let him speak." And then let that man in turn do the same with the next. Let two or three speak and let the others judge, meaning those listening will be judging what that person is saying, whether it be true or not, and making a decision. We all do that.

Herbert Armstrong said that in various ways. One was "Blow the dust off your Bible." The other, we see in the Bible, says, "Prove all things." Consider it together, and the same thing holds true for the ladies. He was not going to let you off the hook.

That is the way to avoid these problems. That is what the apostle Paul is saying in Ephesians 5:21. "Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ." The same holds true for men, women, children, parents, employers, employees, masters, and servants. This is to be taken in its context. The apostle Paul is not preaching peace at any cost, and he is not advocating

compromising the truth. He is not saying we should be pliable and accommodating and compromising with regard to doctrine.

Paul had already written chapters 1, 2, and 3 in his epistle to the Ephesians when he wrote, "Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ." And he laid down basic, essential, fundamental Christian doctrines. This statement is only addressed to people who agree about true doctrine. It is not discussing here the relationships between people who disagree about doctrine. This is talking about converted people with the Holy Spirit, who were in God's church. This is who Paul is speaking to, and preaching to. He assumes that they are on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, and that they are in unity of the faith. A heretic was not allowed to remain in the church, he was to be put out and they were not to have fellowship with him. So Paul is writing here to people who agree about doctrine. He is dealing with the spirit in which they apply the common doctrine about which they agree.

Scripture tells us to earnestly contend for the faith. The apostle Paul thanks the Philippians that they stood with him for the defense and confirmation of the gospel. And this was necessary against those who were opposing sound doctrine. That is what Paul is doing here. He is warning those who are with the Holy Spirit what to do and what to avoid and who to avoid.

It is important to take a statement in this context and how extremely dangerous it is to extract any statement like this out of its context. It can lead to a denial of the teaching of the Scriptures. So he is not saying that we should give everyone an ear when they are preaching apostasy or things against the truth.

Let me give you an example of this taken from second epistle of John, where the matter is put so clearly.

II John 1:10-11 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

That should make the hair raise on the back of our necks. And that is why I do not understand why some people in the church who will listen to the Sunday preachers Sunday morning. I do not get it because you are sharing in

their evil deeds, even though it may sound good. "For he who greets him shares in his evil deeds." That means guilt by association. And we must not submit or give support to anyone who teaches falsely. Submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ does not mean that you compromise yourself through wrong teaching and doctrine, that you say nothing when lies are being propagated. I mean that. Guard the truth, defend the truth.

Now turn over to once again to Ephesians 5. Paul is writing to people who agree about the truth and what he is saying is something like this, paraphrased, "You who agree about the truth, do it in the right way. Don't be opinionated, listen patiently to the other person. Don't lose your cool, know how to be indulgent in argument, let the other speak. Let them express their ideas. Don't be censorious. Don't condemn a person for a word. Be prepared to listen, be generous, but when it comes to vital truth, stand, but always do it in the right way, in the spirit of love. Do it with humility, do it with love, do it with understanding, and do it with hopefulness."

Ephesians 5:21 [Once again it says there] Submitting [yourselves] to one another in the fear of Christ.

Which I have repeated over and over again, that we do not forget it.

Paul does not stop at saying submit yourselves to one another. There is this further addition at the end of his statement, and that is, in the fear of Christ. Here we are told exactly how and why we are to submit ourselves to one another. In other words, this last phrase of Paul's provides us with the motives for submitting ourselves to one another. We can divide it in the following way.

Notice *why* were to submit ourselves to one another. The reasons for doing this is "in the fear of Christ." Now, this is not just a casual addition, it is not just a phrase to round off the injunction. It is not something that Paul wrote without thinking about it, as people sometimes are guilty of doing. Paul *obviously* stated it as an essential part of his inspired teaching and he is laying down his general principle. We are to live a life that is characterized by this, that we submit ourselves one to another in the fear of Christ.

Then he takes this up in three instances: wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters. But what is so interesting to notice is that in each of these three instances, as here in the general statement of principle, he is very careful to make this addition.

First, we see it in the general principle in verse 21, "submitting to one another in the fear of Christ." Then in the first application in verse 22, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord." He repeats it in slightly different wording. He does not stop at saying, wives submit to your own husbands. He adds, "as to the Lord."

In the second application in Ephesians 6:1, in the case of children, he says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." There is no "if" in there, unless it would be that they are trying to make you do something against what God teaches. But other than that, children are to obey their parents. Still the same addition, he does not merely say, children obey your parents for this is right. He says, "obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

Then in the third application regarding the servants and masters, we have the same thing in verses 5-9.

Ephesians 6:5-9 Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ [he repeats it again], doing the will of God from the heart [genuinely], with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord and not to men [That is who you are really working for, you are really working for God, even though you may have a human master.], knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

The whole passage shows that this is clearly a controlling principle, and it is ineffective for us to go on to consider the duties of wives towards husbands,

or of children toward parents, or servants towards masters, unless we are clear about this overriding principle concerning the way that we do these things. The reason why we do these things. Generally, this is the motive that is to govern the whole of Christian living. Everything the Christian does is to be done in the fear of Christ and, by ultimate implication, in the fear of God. The apostle Paul emphasizes that by repeating it each time in the individual instances and here is something that we ignore to our detriment. All is to be in the fear of Christ.

Let me first put it negatively. We are to submit ourselves one to another and do all things that come out of that, not because this is good in and of itself only, because not to do so is bad. There are people in the world who do this because they believe it is the right thing to do, but that is not the reason why the Christian behaves in this way. The thing that distinguishes a Christian from the person who is not a Christian is not merely that he believes in Jesus Christ to salvation and trusts Him, but that in addition, the life of the Christian is *totally governed by God and Christ*. There is not a "mainstream Christian" in the world who is totally governed by God because it requires indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The difference between the Christian and the non-Christian is this: the Christian always knows *why* he does a thing. He always knows what he is doing. The Christian is not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. The worldly person does not know why he does things, he conforms to a pattern, he imitates others. He watches what they do and he does the same. All one must do to see this is to look at the pop culture of this society—the music, the fashion, the food, the toys, and the pagan holidays, to name a few. Non-Christians always conform to society.

It is interesting that in mainstream Christianity, if you talk to someone in maybe a Baptist or some Protestant sect other than that, what you find when you speak to them about the truth and you say things like, "Well, it says in John 3:13 that "no man has ascended into heaven except He who came down from heaven," and they will agree with you because how can they argue with Scripture? But then two sentences later, they will say, "Well, my mother who is in heaven now. . ." See, they do not hear, they just give you lip service back.

And it is interesting because they will always default to their traditions. See, that is what they do. They go along with everyone else. They go along with their traditions, whether it is in pop culture or whether it is in religion, whatever they were taught when they were growing up, that is what they believe and follow. Unless God opens someone's mind, they cannot believe the truth even when they hear it and are shown it in Scripture. I am not saying they always reject it like that, but generally speaking, their tradition supersedes God's truth, I would say, in almost every case.

What are the Christian's particular reasons and motives? The Christian submits himself to others and does these other things, because this is something that has been plainly and clearly taught by Jesus Christ Himself. Matthew 20 illustrates and illuminates this whole subject. Look at the statement beginning in verse 20.

Matthew 20:20-24 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him [that is from Jesus Christ]. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" And she said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom." Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with, but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father." And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased [or you could say jealous] of the two brothers.

Why were the disciples displeased? Because they wanted to be in that supreme position themselves. They were annoyed with the two brothers because they might get a better position than they. We are all so clear about these deficiencies in others, so the ten were filled with indignation.

Matthew 20:25-28 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be

so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

This is one of the clearest commandments and pieces of teaching ever given by Jesus Christ: Serve one another. This is why we must submit ourselves one to another—because Christ has taught us to do so. Remember, He said, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another." Christ has gone out of His way to teach this to us.

Another reason why we are to do these things is in order to show our gratitude to Him. If we really believe what we claim to believe as Christians, our primary focus in life should be to show our gratitude to Him. He commands us to keep His commandments in order that His name might be magnified and glorified. Praying to the Father, Jesus said, "I have glorified Your name on the earth" and then, "I am glorified in them." This is the thing that should always govern all our thoughts and actions, that Christ be glorified in us.

What kind of witness do we give of the Father and of Christ if the world looks at us and sees conduct and behavior that is identical to that of the world? Everybody striving for superiority, everyone trying to promote himself and to call attention to himself. The world does not work in harmony. There are always clashes. The world is full of individuals who are always asserting themselves so that they may call attention to themselves. Often they are opinionated, incessant talkers. This is how the world lives and does everything.

Jesus Christ not only died for us, but He gives us a new life, so we show loving gratitude to Him. We have zeal for the name of the Lord and we know that the way to do that is primarily to live in the way that glorifies God. Therefore the apostle Paul says, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ" is to be our governing, overruling motive.

Now turn to Hebrews 2. Let me take this a step higher. Our desire is to please Him and to reflect His love back to Him. But Paul uses the word fear—in the fear of Christ. That means, among other things, the fear of

disappointing Him, the fear of grieving Him. It is similar to the way a much younger brother or sister does not want to disappoint his or her big brother, and even more so his or her parent.

Hebrews 2:10-13 For it is fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: "I would declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me."

As a result, there is a deep unity between the Son of God and the many spiritual brothers and sisters. By His death, He sanctifies us, and we who are sanctified are of the *same* Family, the exact same Family. Christ's sacrifice sanctifies us in a definitive and final way. As Psalm 22:22 says, which is quoted here in verse 12, what it predicts, Jesus can call us brothers. He can regard us as the "children whom God has given Me." As is mentioned in verse 13, which is a quote from Isaiah 8:17-18, and like an elder brother in the midst of a circle of younger children, the Captain of our salvation can teach us as we suffer with Him. In a sense, He is looking down on us, His reputation is in our hands, and He says, I am glorified in them.

"I am the light of the world," but also we are the light of the world because we reflect Him. The world does not see Him visibly, it sees us, and in a sense, we are the visible light, the only light that it has, and the Christian lives and walks and does all he does in the light of that realization.

That is the kind of fear that comes in the realm of love. And this is the fear of hurting or of grieving or disappointing someone who loves you and who has faith in you, and who trusts you and is fond of you, and who has done so much for you—Jesus Christ and God the Father. Therefore, love is the greatest power and the greatest motivating force in the whole universe. We are enabled to do things for love that we cannot do by our own power or anything else. Love is the greatest and the grandest motive and it operates partly that way.

Please turn over to Hebrews 12. Is there anything more terrible than to realize that we are disappointing the one who so loved us that He gave Himself for us? It grieves us when we fail Him. Loving parents have this heartfelt feeling about their children and children should naturally have the same feeling about their parents. This is the way the Christian lives. There is a fear that should govern all we are and all we do in all our service. The apostle Paul expresses this different type of fear to the scattered church.

Hebrews 12:28-29 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.

Although there is a desirable reverential fear of God, the Bible also portrays God's actions as being causes of terror, especially but not only for those who do not trust in God. However, the faithful manifest the reverential fear of God and Christ by their gratitude, and in their sincere and true worship.

Now please turn over to Luke 22. Acceptable worship considers in reverence and awe God's holiness and His position as a judge. Unlike reverential fear of God, sadly human fear can lead us to cowardice and denial. Can you imagine what it will be like just to look into Christ eyes, standing there with our imperfect record of thoughts and actions? We cringe even to try to imagine that or we do not imagine it because it is unpleasant. But appearing before God, that will be pleasant. But if we have human fear at that time it would be very unpleasant. But we will not. We will have *godly* fear.

Let me give you some conception of it. We are told in the gospels that Jesus had warned Peter that he would deny Him three times before the cock crowed and of how Peter protested. And then the time came when a man challenged Peter and he, anxious to save his own skin in his cowardice, denied his Lord. But remember what we are told afterwards, and that is here,

Luke 22:60-62 But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. [I cannot imagine how that felt.] Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how

He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Jesus did not say a word to him. He just looked at him and He looked at him with a look of disappointment, with a look of sorrow, because Peter had failed Him. Jesus did not give him a look of reprimand. Nevertheless, Peter could not stand it. He probably would have preferred that Jesus say something to him. He may have preferred a thrashing or some harsh comment back to him rather than that silence. It was that look that broke him. "And the Lord looked at Peter." Add the element of judgment to that and you have knowing the terror of the Lord, submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ.

Now flip over to Philipians 2. Wives and husbands, there is no need to argue. Children and parents, there is no need to clash. Servants and masters, there is no need for contention. God and His Son have told us what Their will is. And Christ has given us an example and we are without excuse. Therefore we must submit ourselves one to another in the fear of Christ and of God. We thank God that He gives us the encouragement and the incentive through His own Son's example.

Philippians 2:3-8 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not considered robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 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.

There are certain fundamental essential things about which there must be no question. And there is an irreducible standard to church doctrines and on that we must stand and we do not submit to those who would pervert those things. We stand fast in the truth, even to death if need be. We must do this in the right way and in the right spirit. But when we come to matters about which there cannot be certainty and finality, such as prophecy whose

interpretation is yet to be revealed, it is then especially that we must remember lowliness of mind—humility.

Now turn over to I Corinthians 15 for a final scripture. Here the members of the church in Corinth in general agree about fundamentals and the vital matters, the foundational principles of God's truth. Eventually, the apostle Paul did not have to instruct them about these foundational principles, but only to remind them.

I Corinthians 15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believe in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

So they agreed about the way of salvation, about the deity of Christ, and about other foundational doctrines. They were all basically agreed there. Otherwise they would not have been in the church. But you can agree about those truths and still divide the church and be guilty of schism about other matters.

And it is right here that we must learn to submit ourselves one to another in the fear of Christ. A Christian has opinions, but it is the questionable Christian who is *opinionated*. God granted us the ability to draw that distinction and we are not told not to have opinions, but we are told to hold them as filled with the Spirit manifesting love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control.

Hold and guard and teach the truth in love and then personal relationships will be peaceful and loving and pleasant, and the name of God will be glorified in the church and in your homes.

The bottom line is that our merciful loving Father and our Elder Brother Jesus Christ encourage us to let this mind be in you, which is also in Christ Jesus, so that we may submit to one another in the fear of Christ.

