

Marriage And The Bride Of Christ (Part 1)

Submission in the Fear of Christ

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The Bible is a story about God's family from beginning to end. God made families in the first place partly as a biological and social basis for the human race and partly as the channel of his grace and judgment for bringing many sons (and daughters) to glory. God is making for himself a family of sons and daughters who will submit to Him and each other. He is creating a family to submit to Him, serve Him, praise Him, and reign with Him in His Kingdom forever.

This sermon is the first in the way of an introduction of a series of sermons I plan to give on marriage and family. This first one deals with, "Submission in the Fear of Christ."

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 economical, physical, and mental health, with proper education had to be made for the 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, 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

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comes to very much the same thing, but it does give an additional emphasis to what the Apostle Paul says as we will see.

In verse 21, "Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ," is a statement that we have to be very careful to take in its setting and its context. It is important that we can truly understand what Paul is actually 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." It seems he still has that in mind, and is addressing men and women who are filled with the Spirit.

Filled with the Spirit

Paul has already told the Ephesians certain things about themselves that are inevitably true if they are filled with the Spirit. Here, then, is another one. 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."

The world not only does not do that, but it will not do it and 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."

A man who is drunk is not going to submit himself to anybody. He is already asserting himself. That is the characteristic of such a man. He is lacking control, and especially so in this respect. He is boasting and pleasing himself and thinks he is wonderful.

If we are to submit ourselves one to 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.

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 do that, and 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 meet together to have meetings of happiness and joy. We are to express all that together in worship of God and praise and adoration. But, he also says that we are to manifest this same spirit in our dealings with one another, in the 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.

Being Subject to One Another

It is important that we understand exactly what Paul means, because he is going to illustrate this truth in three particular respects. First he lays down the principle, then he says, "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as to the Lord ... Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right ... Servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh." (Ephesians 5:22; 6:1 and 5) These three are separate and particular illustrations of this fundamental principle that should always govern the relationship of Christian people one with another.

Submitting to one another

Notice that the way that Paul puts it confirms what I have been saying about the connection of this verse with the immediately surrounding verses. "You who are filled with the Spirit, must therefore sing together, and submit yourselves one to another, and behave as follows in the crucial relationships of life."

But, what does, "Submitting yourselves one to another," mean? A better translation, perhaps, would be, "Being subject one to another." The idea that Paul has in mind, in view of the word he uses, is something like a picture of soldiers in a regiment, soldiers in a line under an officer.

The characteristics of a man in that position is that he is, in a sense, no longer an

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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, he is signing away his right to determine his own life and actions. That is an essential part of his contract. When he joins the army, the air force or the navy, or whatever it is, he no longer governs and controls himself; he has to do what he is told.

He cannot go on vacation when he likes, he cannot get up at the 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.

Such is the word the Apostle Paul uses. What he is saying amounts to this—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. We are to do that voluntarily what every soldier is forced (told) to do.

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 one to another? Negatively, it clearly means certain things. We must not be thoughtless. Most of the troubles in life, and most of the clashes, are due to the fact that people do not think! Impetuous action is the greatest cause of clashes, disputes, and unhappiness in every realm of life.

If only people thought before they spoke, 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; 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.

Putting it negatively, therefore, Paul is saying that the Christian must never be a thoughtless person, and 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 in verse 17.

A wise person is one who thinks. He looks before he leaps. He thinks before he speaks. He is governed by thought and by understanding, by meditation and 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 that they do not think except, of course, about themselves.

But this really means that they are not really thinking; they are acting like animals. An animal is always out for itself. It does not think. It acts according to its instincts. Generally speaking, that is the trouble with the non-Christian; he is selfish and self-centered, because he does not think about others.

Remember the Apostle Paul's word and the illustration it suggests. Let me put it another way. The Christian, while he is still an individual, must never be individualistic. The moment we are individualistic we are wrong.

This principle—this characteristic of being individualistic—is impossible in any army. That is one of the first things that must be overcome in a person who goes into the military. It can be a very painful process; but he has to realize that he can no longer act as he did before.

Maybe he was a spoiled child at home. The moment he wanted something, he always got it. He was the ruler. But all that has to stop now. In the army he has to submit to others. It would be impossible to run an army, if it consisted of a series of people who were individualistic; all that has to be submerged.

To express the matter in yet 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. Satan understood that fact at the very beginning when he first tempted man, "Has God said that you must not eat of this?" Satan continued his deception with, "God did so because he knew you would be as gods. That is insulting to you! It is keeping you down! Do not submit to that; assert yourself." Self-assertion it is!

There has been a tremendous amount of trouble in the world because of self-assertion! It has been a major cause of the two world wars. It can be national as well as in the 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. A Christian has, and must have, opinions; but he must never be opinionated.

What a difference there is between a person who has opinions—good opinions, strong opinions—and the person who is opinionated—self-conscious and proud of his opinions. We must never be opinionated because that again is another manifestation of self.

The opinionated person is much more interested in the fact that he believes what he believes. He is always looking at himself. He parades his beliefs.

The way that he does so, of course, always betrays him. He shows that he is proud of his knowledge. That is because he really does not understand the subject about which he knows very little. If he did 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 clashes.

This in turn leads to another trouble. Such a person always tends to be dictatorial and to lord it over others. It is just one more manifestation of self.

I Peter 5:1 The elders who are among you I exhort.

Peter is addressing the elders because this is the particular temptation that confronts a man who becomes an elder—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, too, is particularly exposed to this danger.

I Peter 5:1-3 The elders who are among you I exhort, I 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, 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 it over others in the Church. Elders are to be examples to the flock. It is always the temptation, and the danger to such men. The clearer a man's ideas are, the more exposed he is to this particular temptation. But we must not fall into it; we must submit ourselves one to another.

This theme can be illustrated almost endlessly. So, we sum up what we have been saying by putting it like this: The Christian must never be self-seeking. I have been

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explaining the manifestations of self-seeking. Self-centeredness always leads to self-seeking.

Then, to work it out still further, because this man of the world with 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 it also.

Now he does not realize that, though, because he is so self-centered and thoughtless and unconcerned with respect to the condition and the needs and the desires and the welfare of others that he will have the tendency to go further, and will tend to despise others, treating 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; that is why Paul had to write the 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 more comely 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.

A final way that we can put this consideration is to say that the person who is self-centered, and selfish, individualistic, thoughtless, and self-seeking is almost invariably, at the same time, a person who resents criticism and is impatient of other points of view.

If I am proud of my opinion, then the fact that anyone would dare to question it is a gross insult to me—not to the truth, but to me. "It is what I believe that matters." So this person resents criticism, and is impatient of other 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 self-centeredness is!

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. 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."

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But what do Paul's words mean positively? They are, of course, the exact antithesis of all I have been saying.

"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? Well, this is how it works. Here is a solution to all our problems—personal problems, individual problems, and relationships in marriage, work, business, and school. If you are right concerning the principle, you will solve not only that problem but many others as well.

The Christian way works like this: If the eyes of our understanding are truly enlightened the first thing we learn is the truth about ourselves. 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."

The person who sees that this 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. 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. Whatever may be true of us individually, we are all reduced to the same level.

Paul expresses it well in I Corinthians 4.

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 indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

So 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, and have you made it live?"

Regarding, "What do you have that you did not receive?"—Have you made the

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difference? Of course you have not. Everything you have, you have 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 of these are gifts, we stop boasting, we stop being foolishly proud.

Psalm 100:3 Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us and not we ourselves."

It is God through His Son who gives the gifts by the power of the His Spirit. The world does the exact opposite; it grades people. It has its honors, its glittering prizes, and it looks at these things; these things are everything to them, and they are flushed with pride and with their success.

But Paul says we are not to be like that. This is the same as being, "Drunk with wine, in which is dissipation."

"Be filled with the Spirit." And if you are filled with the Spirit, you realize that God has given everything to you, and you have nothing to boast about.

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.

Paul essentially tells the people in Corinth, "You who are puffed up with your knowledge, what do you really know? You are still babes in Christ. I could not feed you with meat. I could only give you milk, because you are babes. And yet, you are puffed up with your knowledge."

The way to solve these difficulties in relationships is to know the truth about ourselves. The moment we begin to know this truth we see that we are but babes, we are only at the beginning.

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, that he is just a beginner, a babe, and that he is full of failures and of faults.

I Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest

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he fall.

One Body

But not only that, we are members of one body. This is an earlier theme in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, "Submitting to one another." Why do that? It is because we are all like the different parts and members of a body. Paul introduced that idea at the end of chapter 1, and now he works 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 of 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, 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 effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

This is also a theme of I Corinthians 12.

I Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

It is important to realize and remember not that you are just a part, but that you are part of a whole. It is the whole that matters most, and not the part when it comes to the Church. And 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 and personal good.

A great deal of the troubles today are due to the fact that 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.

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People are always thinking of themselves and looking at themselves. They come to the church of God to get something for themselves. Look at this great thing into which we have been put. We are just little parts and members; so let us think of the whole, not the part.

We do not attend services solely for our own edification; we come to Sabbath services to worship God in sincerity and truth, to fellowship, and build up and encourage one another.

The man in the army is not fighting for himself; he is fighting for his country, that is, the principle. The moment a person begins to realize all these things he will be ready to forego his rights, his personal individualistic rights. He needs to understand this conception of the church as the Body of Christ, and the great privilege of being just a little part or portion in it.

Then he will not think primarily of his own rights; he will be interested in the development and the achievement and the advancement of the whole, of every other part also—his neighbor, and the one who is next to him, and so on.

Together they see this great unity, this organic vital unity of the whole. The man who sees this does not worry any longer about his rights as such, and talk about them. He is not always watching and guarding them.

A member of the Body of Christ is always ready to listen and learn. He realizes that he does not have a monopoly on the truth, and that other people have their opinions and ideas also.

He is always ready to listen and learn. He does not automatically reject things; he is patient, and he is understanding.

But we can go further. This is a person who is 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.

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. Believe. Hope all things. Be patient and longsuffering.

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 really filled with the Spirit, because the person who is filled with the Spirit is a person who shows and displays the fruit of the Spirit. By their fruit 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. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

If a person is full of those characteristics there will be no difficulty with him, there will be no trouble. He will be the sort of person who will submit himself 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 the people who are showing the fruit of the Spirit because they are filled with God's Spirit.

This shows itself in an endless number of ways. Let me give you one practical illustration.

I Corinthians 14:29-33 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. 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.

The trouble with Corinth was that 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. 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 cannot help myself." But Paul says, "Oh yes you can. Control yourself, and when you see that the other man has something to say, and you have had your opportunity, stop and let him speak. And then let that

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man in turn do the same with the next. Let two or three speak, and then let the others judge."

Of course, this is not talking about doing this during formal worship services. God is not the author of confusion.

Consider this together, the same thing holds true for the ladies. That is the way to avoid these problems. That, then, is an explanation of what the Apostle Paul is saying in Ephesians 5:21, "Submitting to one another in the fear Christ."

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 of his Epistle to the Ephesians when he wrote, "Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ." He laid down basic, essential, and fundamental Christian doctrines. This statement is only addressed to people who agree about true doctrine. He is not discussing here the relationship between people who disagree about doctrine.

He assumes that they are on the foundation of the apostles and 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 so they were not to have fellowship with him.

Paul is writing here to people who are in agreement 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. This was necessary against those who opposed sound doctrine.

It is important to take a statement in its 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.

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

II John 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 means guilt by association, and we must not submit to anyone who teaches falsely. "Submitting [yourselves] to one another in the fear of Christ" does not mean that you compromise yourself to wrong teaching and doctrine, that you say nothing when lies are being propagated.

Paul is writing to people who agree about the truth, and what he is saying is something like this: "You who agree about the truth, do it in the right way. Do not be opinionated. Listen patiently to the other person. Do not lose your cool. Know how to be indulgent in argument. Let the others speak, and let them express their ideas. Do not be censorious. Do not condemn a person for a word. Be prepared to listen. Be generous. Go as far as you can."

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 Submitting [yourselves] to one another in the fear of Christ.

In the Fear of Christ

Paul does not stop at saying, "Submit [yourselves] to one another," but there is this further addition to the end of his statement, "in the fear of Christ."

Here we are told exactly how and why we are to submit ourselves one to the other. In other words, this last phrase of Paul's provides us with the motives for submitting ourselves to another. Let us notice why we are to submit ourselves to another—the reason for doing so. It 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, almost accidentally, as people are sometimes guilty of doing. Paul obviously stated it as an essential part of his inspired teaching. 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.

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

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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 does not stop at saying only, "Wives, submit to your own husbands," but he adds, "as to the Lord."

Then, in the second application, in the case of children in Ephesians 6:1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Still the same addition! He does not merely say, "Children, obey your parents for this is right," but he also says, "obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

And then, in the third application with regard to the servants and the masters we have the same thing in Ephesians 6.

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 eye service as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 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 to parents, or of servants to masters, unless we are clear about this over-riding principle concerning the WAY that we do these things, the reason WHY we must do them.

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. 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

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things that come out of that, not because this is good in and of itself only, and 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.

The Christian does not merely do things because they are good and right, and because it is wrong to do certain other things. There are billions of people in the world who do that. The differentiating mark of the Christian is that he does everything, "as to the Lord," "in the fear of Christ," and ultimately, "in the fear of God," which God's Holy Spirit makes possible.

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 has to do to see this is to look at the pop-culture of this society—the music, fashion, food, toys, and the pagan holidays to name a few. Non-Christians are always conforming to society.

But the Christian, on the contrary, thinks and reasons. He has wisdom, and knows exactly what he is doing; and the reason is always, "in the fear of Christ."

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 that 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. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" 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." But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able

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to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" 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 with 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. 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! That 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.

Gratitude

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 says, "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 Christ if the world looks at us and

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sees conduct and behavior that is identical with that which is 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 incessant talkers. This is how the world lives, and does everything.

Jesus Christ not only died for us, but He gives us new life. So, the Christian shows loving gratitude to Him. He has zeal for the Name of the Lord; and he knows 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." This is to be our governing over-ruling motive.

Fear

Let me take this a step higher. Our desire is to please Him and to reflect His love back to Him. But Paul uses, "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 was 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 will 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 sons. By His death He sanctifies us, and we who are sanctified are of the same family. Christ's sacrifice sanctified the many sons in a definitive and final way.

So, as Psalm 22:22, which is quoted here in verse 12, predicts, Jesus can call us brothers.

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He can regard us as "the children whom God has given Me" (as He mentions in verse 13, which is a quote from Isaiah 8:17-18). 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. 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, but rather they see us, and, in a sense, we are the light, the only light that it has. The Christian lives, and walks, and does all he does in the light of that realization.

That is the kind of fear that comes into the realm of love. This is the fear of hurting, or grieving, or disappointing someone who loves you, and who has faith in you, and who trusts you, and is fond of you, who has done so much for you.

This is why love is the greatest power and the greatest motivating force in the whole universe. A person is enabled to do things for love that he cannot do by his own will power or anything else. Love is the grandest and greatest motive; and it operates partly in that way.

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, and 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.

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Acceptable worship takes into account (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's eyes, standing there with our imperfect record of thoughts and actions?

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. 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?

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. 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, but just looked at him. 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.

It was that look that broke him—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."

Conclusion

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. 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 consider it 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. There is an irreducible minimum to Church doctrines; on that we must stand. We do not submit to those who would pervert such 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 have to remember lowliness of mind—humility.

The members of the church at Corinth, in general, were in agreement 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 believed 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,

In what way does he have to instruct them? About the way they were talking about one another, about the fact that some were eating meat offered to idols and others not doing so, and so on. They were in agreement about the way of salvation, about the deity of Christ, and about other foundational doctrines. They were all basically agreed; otherwise, they would not have been in the church.

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But you can be in agreement about those truths and still divide the church and be guilty of schism, about other matters. And it is right here that we have to learn to submit ourselves one to the other in the fear of Christ.

If you have no opinions can you really be a Christian? But if you are opinionated you are probably a bad Christian. God grant us the ability to draw that distinction. 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, guard, and teach the Truth in love, and then personal relationships will be peaceful, 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 and loving Father and our Elder Brother Jesus Christ encourage us to submit one to another in the fear of Christ.

And so, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."