

Ephesians

Lesson Sixteen Submission in the Church

5:18-33

Introduction:

1. After establishing the essential nature of the church, Paul began to focus on how a member of the Lord's body is to live.
2. The Christian walk is personal – putting off the old man and putting on the new.
3. However, it also carries over into our relationships with one another – in the church and in the home.
4. The key to those relationships is submission.

5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit

- A. The Christian who walks in wisdom – with his eyes open and redeeming the time – will not allow himself to become drunk with wine.
 1. A sober mind is needed to make right decisions at all times (cf. Gen. 9:21; Prov. 20:1; 23:29-35; Luke 21:34-36).
 2. A sober mind is needed to have one's eyes open to temptations (cf. Gen. 19:32-35; Rom. 13:13).
 3. A sober mind is needed to take advantage of opportunities to do good (cf. Isa. 5:11-13; Matt. 24:45-51).
- B. In intoxication, man finds "excess" – literally, "No hope of safety; an abandoned, dissolute life."
 1. This word is sometimes defined as "prodigal," meaning wasteful.
 2. It is the idea of one who, by not practicing self-control, loses all that he has or that is important to him.
 3. Drunkenness leads to a loss of money, job, family, fellowship, health, and one's own soul.
- C. Intoxication was a popular part of idolatrous worship in Ephesus.
- D. However, the Christian will not be filled with intoxicating spirits, but with the Holy Spirit.
 1. To be filled with the Spirit is to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16).
 2. The Christian is filled with and led by the Holy Spirit when he submits to and follows the Word of God.
 3. Thus, he leads a sober life, governed by the wisdom of God.

5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord

- A. As a result, the singing of the church is not like the carousing of the world nor the revelry of idolatrous worship.
 1. The music of the church is sung in unity from the heart.
 2. The music of the church is sung "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40).
 3. The music of the church is holy, pure, edifying and uplifting.

- B. The description of singing in the church is important to consider.
1. It is to involve speaking – vocal music with the use of intelligent language.
 - a. According to Colossians 3:16, this speaking is to involve teaching and admonishing.
 - b. Thus, our singing must be in the form of words that are understandable.
 - c. Also, we must make sure that the words that are sung are scriptural.
 - d. It is just as wrong to teach error in a song as it is to teach error in a sermon or conversation.
 2. It is to be done “to yourselves” or to “one another” (Col. 3:16); thus, our singing is congregational – each member reciprocating to all others.
 3. It is to involve specific types of songs.
 - a. Psalms are defined as “a sacred ode or piece of music; a pious song.”
 - b. Hymns are defined as “a sacred song in the praise of gods, heroes, or conquerors.”
 - c. Spiritual songs are defined as “non-carnal, ethereal chant or composition.”
 - d. In other words, our songs are to be focused on holy and spiritual truths, not worldly or fleshly ideas.
 4. It is to involve the heart – from which our singing flows.
 - a. All worship to God is to be done “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).
 - b. Singing that is mere ritual or habit is not pleasing to God.
 - c. We must think about and mean the words we sing.
 - d. Also, according to Colossians 3:16, we must sing with grace in our hearts.
 - e. We sing out of gratitude for the grace of God.
 - f. And, we sing to make known to others the grace of God.
 5. It is to be directed to the Lord.
 - a. All worship in the church is to be done for and directed toward God.
 - b. Worship is not conducted for the entertainment of the church.
 - c. It is not to be carried out in a way that pleases (or even appeals to) man, but according to the instructions of the Lord.
 - d. While man benefits from worshipping God, his purpose must be to honor and serve the Lord.
- C. Though the New Testament only authorizes congregational singing in worship to God, many try to use this verse to justify mechanical instrumental music in worship.
1. They argue that instrumental music is allowed because it is not specifically condemned.
 - a. However, this verse is in the form of a command.
 - b. Every Christian is to sing and make melody in his or her heart.
 - c. If this includes instrumental music, then every Christian **must** play an instrument to truly worship God!
 2. They argue that the Greek word *psallo* (ψαλλω) – translated as “making melody” – actually means to play the strings of an instrument.
 - a. It is true that this word was sometimes used this way by the Greeks.
 - b. Again, if it means that here, then every Christian must play an instrument.
 - c. However, God has told us which instrument we are to pluck or play.
 - d. Every Christian is commanded to make melody in his or her heart.
 - e. The heart is the only instrument authorized for use in NT worship.

- D. Even in worship, Christians are to be concerned for one another and for one's individual influence upon others.

5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

- A. An attitude of thanksgiving is to be in the heart of Christians as they worship God, especially in song.
- B. Furthermore, the songs sung in worship to God ought to include gratitude to the Creator and Savior.
- C. Like our prayers, the worship of the church is offered in the name of Jesus.
 - 1. This is not merely a phrase to be uttered.
 - 2. Instead, it means that the Christian worship by the authority of Christ.
 - 3. This is worshipping in truth (John 4:24).
- D. The word for "and" can also be translated as "even;" thus, "God, even the Father."

5:21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God

- A. The Bible concept of submission is worthy of closer consideration.
 - 1. The Greek word is a combination of two words – "under" and "ordain;" thus, subordinate.
 - 2. It means, "To be subject unto; to be in subjection under; to submit one's self unto; to obey."
- B. This idea is usually understood in relation to one's superiors.
 - 1. Submission to God (Luke 10:17; Rom. 8:7; 10:3; 1 Cor. 15:27-28; Eph. 1:22; Heb. 12:9; Jam. 4:7; 1 Pet. 3:22)
 - 2. Submission to parents (Luke 2:51)
 - 3. Submission to authority (Rom. 13:1, 5; Titus 2:9; 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13, 18)
 - 4. Submission to self (1 Cor. 14:32)
- C. However, the Bible also teaches for Christians to be in submission to all brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - 1. We are to submit to the elders (Hebrews 13:17).
 - 2. The younger are to submit to the older (1 Peter 5:5).
 - 3. In the public assembly, women are to submit to the men (1 Cor. 14:34; cf. 1 Tim. 2:11-12).
 - 4. Yet, every Christian is to submit also to all other children of God (1 Cor. 16:15-16; 1 Pet. 5:5; cf. Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:3; Luke 14:7-11).
 - a. **J** - Jesus first
 - b. **O** - Others next
 - c. **Y** - Yourself last
- D. This paints a picture of true *agape* love and true Christian servanthood.
 - 1. An example of a failure in this regard is Diotrephes (3 John 9-11).
 - 2. An example of the chaos brought into the church by disobeying this instruction is seen in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:11-12; 4:7-10; 5:1-2; 6:1-8; 8:4, 7-10; 10:23-24, 27-33; 11:20-22; 12:20-31; 13:1-13).
- E. Our submission must be carried out with a fear of God.
 - 1. We obey because we respect and reverence God and His Word.
 - 2. Yet, we also live with the awareness that we are subject unto the Lord.
 - 3. Thus, we strive to be good servants **and** good masters.
 - 4. Paul now focuses on specific relationship in which Christians must practice submission.

5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord

- A. God's Order of Authority (1 Corinthians 11:1-3)
 - 1. God - Head of all (including Christ)
 - 2. Christ - Head of man
 - 3. Man - Head of woman
 - 4. Woman
- B. God's Order of Creation (Genesis 2:21-24).
 - 1. Man was created first (Gen. 1:27; 2:7; 1 Cor. 11:8; 1 Tim. 2:13).
 - 2. Woman was created from man and for man (Gen. 2:18, 22; 1 Cor. 11:9).
 - 3. Woman was deceived into sin (Gen. 3:6; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14).
 - 4. Both man and woman failed in their respective roles.
- C. God's Design in Creation (Genesis 3:16-19)
 - 1. Man's role is to lead, provide, and protect.
 - 2. Woman's role is to support, nurture, and guide (cf. Gen. 4:7; Song 7:10 – on “*desire*”).
 - 3. However, they are to work together in unity and love (Gen. 2:24; 1 Cor. 11:8-12; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-6).
- D. In Ephesians, Paul reminds the Christian that obedience and faithfulness to God carries over into the home.
- E. Wives are to submit to their own husbands.
 - 1. Remember the definition of submission.
 - 2. Remember that all are submissive to others – especially as Christians.
 - 3. Thus, this is not a demeaning or disparaging of the woman.
 - 4. In fact, it is an encouragement for her to fill her potential as given and designed by God.
- F. This is stated in the form of a command; thus, to disobey is to sin against God.
 - 1. In the home, our actions are to be done “as unto the Lord.”
 - 2. We ought to behave accordingly because we love our family, but also because we are serving God.
- G. In the home, wives are to submit to their own husbands only.
 - 1. No man has authority over another man's home or family.
 - 2. The children do not have authority over their parents.
 - 3. This serves to illustrate the relationship between Christ and the church.

5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body

- A. Just as the husband has authority in the home, even over his wife, so Christ has authority over His bride, the church.
- B. As the head of the household, the husband is responsible for guiding the home in a godly direction.
- C. As the Head of the church, Jesus leads the body in the way that is pleasing to God – by His Gospel.
 - 1. Thus, the church must submit to His authority.
 - 2. However, rebellion is possible – though it leads to separation and death.
- D. The last phrase of this verse points out a difference in these two relationships.
 - 1. The ASV reads, “...being himself the savior of the body.”
 - 2. The husband is not the savior of the wife; for, Jesus is the only Savior of all men (cf. 5:25-26; Acts 20:28; 4:12; etc.).

- E. Every organization must have a head – a place of final authority.
 - 1. In government – *president, king, etc.*
 - 2. In business – *CEO, boss, etc.*
 - 3. In school – *principal, superintendent, etc.*
 - 4. In religion – *Christ, elders*
 - 5. In the home – *husband, father*
 - 6. This does not mean tyranny or dictatorship; but, it does mean that the husband is responsible for the spiritual direction of the family.

5:24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing

- A. For this reason, the wife (as well as the children) is to be in subjection to her husband.
- B. This submission is “in every thing” – meaning that there is no area in which the husband is not head of the household.
 - 1. Parents have this same authority over their children (Colossians 3:20).
 - 2. Masters have this same authority over their servants (Col. 3:22; Titus 2:9).
 - 3. Christ has this authority over the church (cf. Col. 3:17; Titus 2:7).
- C. Obviously, the exception to this rule is in matters that would violate the Word of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:12-16; 1 Peter 3:1-7).
- D. Again, it is emphasized that the church is subject unto Christ – obedient to His will.

5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it

- A. As the wife willing submits herself to the leadership of her own husband, he must lead the home with sacrificial love.
 - 1. The heart of a Christian husband (and father) is not bent toward becoming a despot or tyrant.
 - 2. His desire is to see his family make it to Heaven because he loves them and their souls as he loves himself.
 - 3. As human beings, we often fall short in these areas and in our relationships.
 - 4. However, the Christian husband and wife will work together to correct mistakes and grow stronger in faith and obedience.
- B. The Christian husband is willing to sacrifice whatever is necessary for his wife, his marriage, and his family.
 - 1. His pride
 - 2. His time
 - 3. His money
 - 4. His life
- C. The example to be followed is Jesus and His love for the church.
 - 1. Jesus humbled Himself for the church (cf. Philippians 2).
 - 2. Jesus devoted His time to the establishing of the church.
 - 3. Jesus gave up worldly goods to build the church.
 - 4. Jesus died on the cross for the church (cf. Acts 20:28).
- D. In this same manner, husbands are to love and to sacrifice for their wives (cf. Colossians 3:19; 1 Peter 3:7).

5:26-27 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish

- A. The purpose of the sacrifice of Jesus was the forgiveness of sins and the gathering of the saved into the church.
- B. Thus, what the blood of Christ does for the sinner it also does for the church.
- C. The church is sanctified because each Christian is sanctified.
 - 1. To be sanctified is to be purified or made holy (Jn. 17:17; Ac. 26:28; Titus 2:14; Heb. 10:10).
 - 2. When man's sins are washed away, he is purified and becomes a saint.
 - 3. Thus, the church is a sanctified and holy body.
- D. The church is cleansed because each Christian is cleansed.
 - 1. To be cleansed is to be cleaned, purged, or purified (1 John 1:7).
 - 2. Thus, the church is a clean and pure body.
- E. The church is washed because each Christian is washed.
 - 1. The word for "washing" actually means, "The act of bathing; bath."
 - 2. This word is found only one other time in the New Testament (Titus 3:5).
 - 3. In both of these verse it refers to baptism for the remission of sins.
 - 4. Thus, the church is a body of people who have been baptized in order to have their sins removed (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11; 12:13; Acts 2:38, 42, 47; 22:16).
- F. The church is glorious because each Christian is glorified.
 - 1. The word for "glorious" means, "Splendid, noble, honorable; held in high esteem."
 - 2. In Luke 7:25, this word describes gorgeous apparel.
 - 3. The Christian is arrayed in white robes, cleansed by the blood of Jesus (Revelation 7:13-14).
 - 4. Thus, the church is arrayed in "fine linen, clean and white" at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9).
- G. The church is spotless because each Christian is without spot, wrinkle, or blemish.
 - 1. Using the imagery of clothing, the church is described as being unsoiled and unwrinkled, without any blemish.
 - 2. This does not mean that Christians are perfect and never sin.
 - 3. But, with access to the blood of Christ, sins can continue to be forgiven as the child of God repents and prays (Acts 8:22ff; 1 John 1:7-9).
- H. The church is to be presented to Jesus by Jesus.
 - 1. The Greek word for "present" means, "To stand beside, to exhibit, to recommend; to set at hand, to bring near; to bring into one's intimacy."
 - 2. This is imagery of a wedding ceremony (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2; Col. 1:22).
 - a. By His blood, Jesus prepares the church for the marriage.
 - b. At His return, the church is joined to the Lord to dwell together forever in Heaven (cf. John 14:1-7).
- I. As a bride stands beside her husband in purity on their wedding day, so will the church stand beside Jesus in purity on the Day of Judgment.
 - 1. In order for this to happen, we must remove sin from our lives before that day comes.
 - 2. We must be obedient to the Gospel while there is time and opportunity.
 - 3. Only the pure, the cleansed, the forgiven will be taken by the Lord to that eternal home in Heaven.
 - 4. In fact, only those who have been washed by the blood of Christ are a part of His body, His bride.

5:28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself

- A. Jesus loves the church, for it is His own body.
- B. In like manner, husbands are to love their wives as they love themselves – their own bodies.
- C. In marriage, the man and woman become “one flesh” – thus, she is his body, and he is hers (5:31; Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5).
 - 1. Barnes wrote: “[A] husband should have the same care for the comfort of his wife which he has for himself. He should regard her as one with himself; and as he protects his own body from cold and hunger, and, when sick and suffering, endeavors to restore it to health, so he should regard and treat her.”
 - 2. The end result is that as the marriage is strengthened, both husband and wife are stronger as individuals.
 - 3. By loving and supporting one’s spouse, he is also benefitting himself.
- D. Again, this is a picture of true, sacrificial love.
 - 1. Jesus loved the church – His spiritual body – more than He loved His own fleshly body.
 - 2. He was willing to give His life for the church.
 - 3. Likewise, husbands are to love their wives with a willingness to sacrifice for their well-being.

5:29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church

- A. The Bible teaches that man is to have a proper love for himself.
 - 1. This is not pride, arrogance, or haughtiness.
 - 2. This is not an improper view of one’s sins and mistakes.
 - 3. But, it is a proper understanding of the value of one’s soul.
 - 4. And, it is a self-esteem that realizes God’s love for each individual.
- B. As a man does not hate himself, neither should he despise his wife.
- C. As a man nourishes and cherishes himself, so should he nourish and cherish his wife.
- D. Again, this was how the Lord cared for His body, the church.

5:30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones

- A. The two illustrations of the church are combined in this verse.
- B. The church is the body of Christ; thus, the members (individual Christians) are a part of that body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:27; John 15:1-8; Eph. 1:22-23).
- C. The church is the bride of Christ; thus, the members (individual Christians) are “bone of His bone” and “flesh of His flesh” (cf. Genesis 2:23).

5:31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh

- A. This love of husband for wife is manifested in the very institution of marriage itself – the leaving of father and mother, and the cleaving to one’s wife.
- B. That initial love and devotion must continue throughout the marriage.

5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church

- A. The mystery is the revealed truth that the Christian's union with Christ is parallel to the relationship of the husband and the wife.
 - 1. The theme of the book of Ephesians is the essential and glorious nature of the church.
 - 2. In 1:9, the mystery revealed was God's plan to gather all the saved into the church, through the sacrifice of Jesus.
 - 3. In 3:3-4, the mystery revealed was the inclusion of the Gentiles in the church of Christ.
 - 4. In 3:9, the mystery revealed was the fellowship of all men in the church, God's eternal purpose.
 - 5. In 6:19, the mystery revealed was simply the good news of salvation in the body of Christ.
 - 6. Here, the mystery revealed is that the eternal Son of God would join Himself to man with a bond that supersedes even the ties of marriage.
- B. The idea is that man should understand the relationship of marriage, because he sees it and participates in it.
- C. This knowledge should help in understanding the mystery of the Christian's relationship to Christ.
- D. This should remind us why marriage and the home are fundamental and vital parts of society.

5:33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband

- A. In spite of this mystery, the husband and wife still have duties to one another.
- B. The husband is to love his wife as he loves himself – in fact, seeing her as a part of himself.
- C. The wife is to reverence her husband.
 - 1. The Greek word for 'reverence' is *phobia*, meaning, "To fear; to reverence, to venerate, to treat with deference and respect."
 - 2. It is meant to emphasize the role of the husband as the head of the house.
 - 3. The wife is to respect his authority and defer to him in final decisions.
 - 4. The idea is that God's order for the home must be respected and followed.
- D. This pattern and these commands are for all husbands and wives – "every one of you in particular."

Tom Holland outlines the chapter this way in one of his sermons...

- I. The Seriousness of *Subjection* (5:23-24)
- II. The Precious Nature of *Purity* (5:25-27)
- III. The Consecrated *Closeness* (5:28-32)

"Paul accomplishes two things in comparing the husband-wife relationship to the Lord and His church. (1) He sets forth the ideal for marriage: the Lord's relationship to His church. (2) He shows the subjection, purity, and closeness that must be obtained between the Lord and His bride (the church)."