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**C0513 -- Mar. 30, 2005 – Ephesians 5:18-21 – Submission in the Church**

How are we to give thanks? Paul says **give thanks...in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**. The **name of...Jesus Christ** is like a channel of power. Salvation, prayer, and thanksgiving, to be effective, must go through this single channel, the **name of Jesus Christ**. Apart from this channel nothing is going to happen. So Paul says we are supposed to give thanks **in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**.

To whom should we give thanks? Paul says **to God the Father**. Observation; all three members of the Trinity have been mentioned in this section.

- 1) We are to be filled by the Holy Spirit (v. 18)
- 2) We are to give thanks in the name of Jesus Christ (v. 20)
- 3) We are to give thanks to God the Father (v. 20)

This is once again why Ephesians is known as the ‘Trinitarian Letter’.

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<sup>21</sup> ~Upotasso,menoi avllh,loi j evn fo,bw| Cristou/(

**Ephesians 5:21 submitting to one another in fear of Christ.**

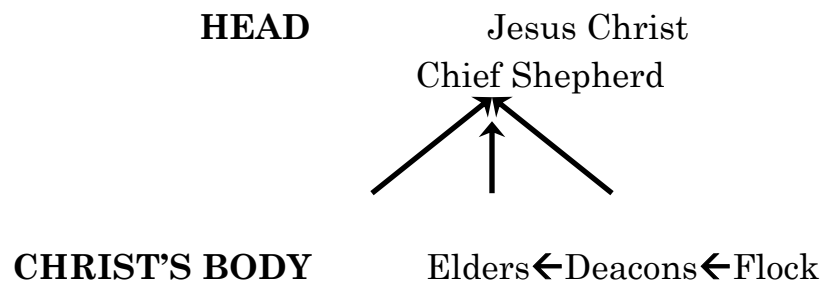
Verse 21 is the fitting conclusion to verses 15-21. It is not the beginning of the next section but it is the transition verse for understanding what follows. It is the fourth fruit of being filled by the Spirit; 1) Speaking to one another...2) singing and making melody...3) always giving thanks...and 4) submitting to one another in fear of Christ. These are all results of being filled by the Spirit. You cannot ever manifest these characteristics unless filled by the Spirit. Being filled by the Spirit means yielding your will to the Lord’s will, which if you are wise you will understand.

Let's look at the fourth result of being filled by the Spirit; **submitting to one another in the fear of Christ**. The word here for **subject** or **submit** is *hupotasso*. It is a military term meaning "to rank yourself under a leader". When you are under the control of the Holy Spirit you will rank yourself under others because you yield your will to the Lord's will. And the Lord's will is for you to **submit**. You are to do this **in fear of Christ**. Believers are not to act like unbelievers. Unbelievers take great pride in "independence" and "individualism". Believers are instructed to act otherwise. We are commanded to "*give preference to one another in honor*" (Rom 12:10). We are to be humble regarding "*one another as more important than*" ourselves (Phil 2:3) and it is impossible to consider others as more important than ourselves unless we are filled by the Spirit. If you are a self-centered brat, always concerned about yourself and your needs then this is a sign that you are rarely, if ever filled by the Holy Spirit. You are full of yourself and need to learn the doctrine of kenosis (Phil 2:5-8). Christ gave up the independent use of His divine attributes. He yielded His will to the Father's will (Matt 26:39). Later tonight I'm going to show you important it is to follow Christ's example of yielding your will. You cannot live the Christian life if you don't train yourself to yield your will to the Lord's will. Jesus Christ did not walk independently. Jesus Christ walked dependently, being filled by the Spirit, in submission to the Father. As believers in Jesus Christ who desire to be Christ-like we must also be filled by the Holy Spirit in order to submit ourselves to one another. This subordination, as we'll demonstrate, is not contrary to equality. There is both submission and equality in the body of Christ

Who are we to submit to? The reciprocal pronoun **one another** indicates that this is mutual submission. I submit to you and you submit to me. The problem however, is "HOW DOES MUTUAL SUBMISSION WORK?" For example, if believer A submits to believer B then B is not submitting himself to A, but ruling. Only one person can rule at a time. So, how do we solve this dilemma? The solution lies in the way Paul applies this principle in the relationships described in 5:22-6:9: wives-husbands, children-fathers, and slaves-masters. So, the way mutual submission works is like this, "let each of you submit yourself to the ones who you should be submissive to" (e.g. wives should submit to husbands, children should obey their fathers, slaves should obey their masters, etc...). The bottom line is that you must be willing to submit to those

who have authority, whether it is in the church, home, workplace, or society at large.

This week let's look at submission within the church since that is the context of Eph 5:15-21. Although not directly mentioned here there are areas of authority and subordination in the local church. Believers only gather for a few hours per week so submission in church should not be that difficult. Christ is the head, the Church is His body. Within the body the offices of authority include elders (pl) and deacons (pl).



Elders and deacons are a part of the flock but not all of the flock are elders or deacons. All are responsible to Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd. All have spiritual gifts but not all hold offices. There are clear lines of authority but also equality before God. We all have different roles to fulfill but we all share the same position in Christ.

The authoritative offices include the elders and the deacons, a plurality of men in each office. First, let's look at the **elder's qualifications**.

**1 Timothy 3:15** *I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.*

**1 Timothy 3:1-7** It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*.<sup>2</sup> An overseer, then, must be above reproach [blameless], the husband of one wife [digamy, cf 1 Tim 5:9; not "husband of a wife" or "husband of one wife at a time" but "husband of one wife"; not condemning polygamy or bigamy but digamy, being married twice legally; a divorced man who is not remarried still qualifies], temperate [sober, self-controlled], prudent [of sound mind], respectable, hospitable, able to teach [doesn't say "must...teach" but

“must...be able” and willing (cf v. 1) to teach”], <sup>3</sup> not addicted to wine or pugnacious [bully, demanding], but gentle [considerate], peaceable, free from the love of money. <sup>4</sup> *He must be* one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity <sup>5</sup> (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), <sup>6</sup> *and* not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. <sup>7</sup> And he must have a good reputation with those outside *the church* [in the community], so that he will not fall into reproach [insulting or abusing others] and the snare of the devil.

Second, the **elders responsibilities**.

**1 Peter 5:1-3** Therefore, I exhort the **elders** among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, <sup>2</sup> shepherd [tend, care for] the flock of God among you, exercising oversight [watching over] not under compulsion [force], but voluntarily [willfully], according to *the will of God* [*kata* with accusative, according to the standard of God]; and not for sordid gain [material gain], but with eagerness [strong desire to serve]; <sup>3</sup> nor yet as lording [dominating] it over those allotted to your charge [given a share], but proving to be examples [type, standard] to the flock.

The second office is deacon and the **deacon's qualifications** are also in 1 Tim 3.

**1 Timothy 3:8-13** Deacons likewise *must be* men of dignity [honorable], not double-tongued [saying one thing to one person and another thing to someone else], or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, <sup>9</sup> *but* holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. <sup>10</sup> These men must also first be tested *dokimazo* - test to approve not to disapprove]; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach [*anegkletos* - one who cannot be accused]. <sup>11</sup> Women [wives of the deacons] *must* likewise *be* dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. <sup>12</sup> Deacons must be husbands of *only* one wife [same as v. 2], *and* good managers [rulers] of *their* children and their own households. <sup>13</sup> For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high

[beautiful] standing and great confidence [*parresia* - boldness] in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

The **deacon's responsibilities** are to serve in the areas decided by the elders. Whatever the elders delegate to the deacons is their responsibility (Acts 6:1-6).

The flock is to follow and submit to the leadership of both the elders and by extension of authority, the deacons. This is found in Heb 13:17.

**Hebrews 13:17** Obey [*peitho* - follow] your leaders and submit [*hupeiko* - give way to, yield to] *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable [*alusiteles* - harmful;detrimental] for you.

As per classes of individuals in the flock we have seven: **older men, younger men, older women and younger women, wives, husbands, and children**. These overlap somewhat and we're going to cover some of these in detail in the coming weeks so let's just look at four of these: older men, younger men, older women and younger women.

### **Older men**

**Titus 2:2-8** Older men are to be temperate [sober-self controlled], dignified [worthy of respect], sensible [healthy mind that leads to orderly life], sound in faith, in love, in perseverance.

### **Older women**

<sup>3</sup> Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior [God fearing devout lives], not malicious gossips [diabolic] nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good [*kalodidaskalos*], <sup>4</sup> so that they may encourage [train] the young women

### **Younger women**

to love [pleasant, welcoming] their husbands, to love [same] their children, <sup>5</sup> *to be* sensible [modest], pure [holy, innocent], workers at

home [devoted to home duties], kind [good, useful], being subject to their own husbands [not to other husbands but their own husband], so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

## **Younger men**

<sup>6</sup> Likewise urge the young men to be sensible [healthy mind]; <sup>7</sup> in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds [honest good worker], *with* purity in doctrine [incorrupt instruction], dignified [*semnotes* - serious], <sup>8</sup> sound *in* speech [healthy speech] which is beyond reproach [not condemnable], so that the opponent [hostile one] will be put to shame [to cause to turn, to cause to respect], having nothing bad to say about us.

Additionally, 1 Pt 5:5 says that young men are to submit to [*hupotasso* - rank themselves under] the elders (1 Pt 5:5). Peter stresses this because it is young men who are most zealous for high positions of authority but they are to submit to the elders so that God may exalt them at the proper time. All believers are to be humble toward one another; not to think of themselves highly because there is equality in Christ (Gal 3:28; 1 Pt 5:5).

Obviously, everyone here fits in one or more of these categories. For the church to be unified and healthy we all have responsibilities to one another. These lines of authority and responsibility have been given in order to preserve the **unity** and cause spiritual growth (Eph 4:3; 11-16). No one is left without responsibilities. It is not only the ones who are to submit who have responsibilities. Those who have authority also have responsibilities. This is what makes the NT Christian ethic so unique.

**I cannot stress too much how important it is to remember that the only way to follow the responsibilities that each of us have in the church is by being filled by the Spirit!** It is only when we are filled by the Spirit that these characteristics are manifested.

Now, we have to talk a little about the relationship between *equality* and *subordination* because there is a lot of confusion in this area. Is equality inconsistent with subordination?

## Equality

The word of God clearly teaches that all men are equal in Christ. Turn to Gal 3:28.

**Galatians 3:26-28** For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup> For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

If there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female then how can we still have subordination in the body of Christ. For example, if there is no such thing as male-female distinctions in Christ Jesus then how can we say that only males can hold the office of elder? Shouldn't anyone who is "in Christ" be able to hold the office of elder? Paul must have simply been speaking to the 1<sup>st</sup> century culture that doesn't apply to our modern 21<sup>st</sup> century. Well, let's back up and see what the context is.

**Galatians 3:24** Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us to* Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

The context is justification by faith. In terms of how one is justified there are no distinctions. Paul is not erasing all distinctions between these classes. So, the only sense in which there **is neither Jew nor Greek...neither slave nor free man...neither male nor female** is the way one is justified; by faith. We are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. In other words, it doesn't matter what race you are you are justified by faith. It doesn't matter what your social status is you are justified by faith. It doesn't matter what your sex is you are justified by faith. We are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. But this does not erase all distinctions in these classes. Distinctions still exist in other areas.

For example, let's take Jews and Gentiles. Jews have an advantage over Gentiles because they were entrusted with the oracles of God (Rom 3:2). **Romans 3:1-2** *"Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? <sup>2</sup> Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God."* Paul still considered himself a Jew even after becoming a

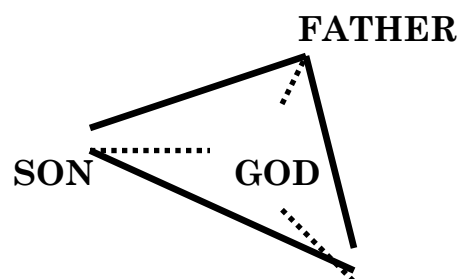
Christian (Rom 9:3-4). **Romans 9:3-4** “For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup> who are Israelites,”. Does this make Jews better than us? No. **Romans 3:9** “What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;”. All are under sin and all are saved by grace through faith.

If all distinctions were erased then we must also say that there are no distinctions between male and female. This would mean that homosexual marriage would be legitimate. Galatians 3:28 is one of the most abused verses in modern Christianity. It is taught that it erases all distinctions, but it only says that the one area of no distinction is the way one is justified; no matter what your race, social class, or sex, justification is by faith alone in Christ alone.

### **How do we reconcile Equality with Subordination?**

Equality means we are equal in Christ but the Bible also teaches subordination of role. “For example, all citizens of a country are equal but there are also many different ranks in the power structure of the country. It does not mean that those in authority are better citizens of the country than those whom they rule.”<sup>i</sup> In the church there is equality in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female (Gal 3:28). But there are also positions of authority in the Church (e.g. elders and deacons) as well as subordinate roles (e.g. flock submit to leaders, younger women submit to older women, younger men submit to older men, children obey parents, wives submit to husbands).

The most striking example of equality and subordination is the persons of the Godhead. All three persons of God are equal yet the Son is subordinate to the Father, the Holy Spirit to the Father, and the Holy Spirit to the Son.





## SPIRIT

**All Three Persons Equal (Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 4:4-6; 1 Pt 1:2; John 13:16; 17:21)**

**Matthew 28:19** <sup>19</sup> "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

**2 Corinthians 13:14** <sup>14</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

**\*Ephesians 4:4-6** <sup>4</sup> *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

**1 Peter 1:1-2** chosen <sup>2</sup> according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood:

**\*John 13:16** <sup>16</sup> "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor *is* one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.

**John 17:21** <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You,

**Son Subordinate to Father (Matt 10:40; 26:39, 42; John 8:29, 42; 12:49-50)**

**Matthew 10:40** <sup>40</sup> "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.

**\*Matthew 26:39** <sup>39</sup> And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." **Matthew 26:42** <sup>42</sup> He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done."

**John 8:42** <sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

**John 12:49-50** <sup>49</sup> "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment *as to* what to say and what to speak. <sup>50</sup> "I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

### **Spirit Subordinate to Father (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15)**

**\*John 14:26** <sup>26</sup> "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

**John 15:26** <sup>26</sup> "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,

**John 16:13-15** <sup>13</sup> "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. <sup>14</sup> "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you. <sup>15</sup> "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.

### **Spirit Subordinate to Son (John 16:7; cf 14:26; 15:26)**

**John 16:7** <sup>7</sup> "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

**John 14:26** <sup>26</sup> "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

**\*John 15:26** <sup>26</sup> "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,

Thus, there is *equality of essence* among the persons of the Trinity but *subordination of roles* among the persons. If equality and subordination are in the Trinity then they are not contradictory. This is so important for understanding the equality of essence of all believers in Jesus Christ but the subordination of roles among believers in Jesus Christ. Some hold offices, some do not, some are men, some are women, some are older, some are younger but all are essential. This is going to be crucial in understanding the husband-wife relationship, the child-father relationship, and the slave-master relationship in the coming weeks. Just as there is unity and diversity in the Trinity it should not be surprising that we find unity and diversity in the Church (Eph 4:1-6 = unity; Eph 4:7-16 = diversity).

### **Two Major Points**

- 1) Equality does not contradict subordination (e.g. Trinity)
- 2) Subordination can only take place when you surrender your will to the Lord's will (i.e. be filled by the Holy Spirit)

Submission/subordination to one another is not to be taken lightly but is to be done **in the fear of Christ**. This is the motivation for submitting to one another. We are to submit to one another **in the fear of Christ**. The word **fear** is *phobos* and it can mean outright "terror", something that sends you running or it can mean "respect". The sense here is not simply "respect". It is more than that. Here there is a mixture of being in "terror of Christ and respecting Christ". Being in **fear of Christ** motivates believers to be filled by the Spirit with the result that he submits to others in the body of Christ. This verse is the hinge verse as we move into three applications of walking in wisdom in 5:22-6:9. The reason this verse is the hinge is because submission to one another is the key in every relationship that follows. IF WE DON'T LEARN that submission depends absolutely on being filled by the Spirit then we will never learn to submit to those who have authority over us. Children will not obey their parents if they are not taught that the way to do that is by being filled by the Holy Spirit. Wives will not submit to their husbands if they don't learn that the way to do that is by being filled by the Holy Spirit. Slaves will not work honorably for their masters if they are not taught that the way

to do it is by being filled by the Holy Spirit. Being filled by the Spirit is the key to the first three Divine Institutions: Labor, Marriage, and Family. And what does it mean to be filled by the Spirit? It means yielding control of one's will to the Lord's will. That's the key to subordination/submission to the Divine Institutions.

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<sup>i</sup> Hoehner, 726.