

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5

“13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. 14 Therefore He says: “Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.” 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

“The Importance of Submission”

The Apostle John in his grand introduction of his Gospel account, declares this about Jesus: “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

John goes on to refer to Jesus as Light six more times in that short first chapter and it is a theme we have seen here in Ephesians chapter five where back at verse 8 we read: 8 “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light... finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.”

We have been on a long journey through this important Epistle, but it is now time to consider the practical outworking of what is “acceptable to the Lord,” and how we are to be light.

Now with that sermon title I am sure you men are ready to be hammered this morning, but I am going to have to take a little time to reset where we are at and keep things short with all the excitement of baptisms and new members that we have this morning, so I won’t be too rough on you.

Believe it or not we began this series back in 2018, and I make no apologies for taking most of that year to cover the glorious truths found in that first chapter! *[on line if anyone needs to review or listen to them]*

Now I am not as slow as it might appear because we got through chapter two in early 2019 before I had to take a break for my cancer treatments and came back with a short detour through the Book of James.

Then even with all the covid disruptions and Pastor Liberati coming on as our associate pastor, we got through chapters 3 & 4 in 2020 and the early part of chapter five this year.

Pastor Liberati has to focus on his studies for the next couple of months so it will give me some uninterrupted pulpit time to move through these practical lessons, Lord willing!

- So this morning I will lay down some basic principles that we will keep in mind in the coming weeks!

We must remember where the foundations for these applications is laid and the grand truth the Apostle Paul laid out for us in verse 21 where we read, “submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

We touched on that second principle in a few of the earlier messages and it has sparked some interesting discussions! Should it be seen in isolation along with Paul’s other admonitions for wives to submit to their husband, husband to love their wives & children to obey their parents.

- Or is it rather an overriding truth that has applications throughout these other examples.

I hinted that I supported the later and was pleased to see this week that Pastor Lloyd-Jones agreed with me! In doing so he pointed out an interesting fact about how the Apostle structures this later portion of chapter five that I had not considered. And it relates to the first principle of where our foundations come from. What is the first verse of the Bible?

So is it safe to say that everything in Creation is subject to God?

It is also important to remember that it is NOT a tyrannical submission but one that reflects the loving relationship we learn about in the Persons of the Trinity.

The Father and the Son are equal and yet the Son is subject to the Father. The Spirit is also equal to the Father and the Son and yet He proceeds from both the Father and the Son, or at least from the Father if you have an Eastern Orthodox background.

So when we hear Paul say we are to be “submitting to one another in the fear of God” it is that sort of relational submission we should have in mind.

- As opposed to establishing some sort of pecking order for who is really in charge!

Now Pastor Lloyd-Jones argues that it is not without a purpose that the Apostle seems to mix the order up a bit here in this chapter: In fact it is almost a complete reversal.

We know in the Creational order that man came first and that women are to be their help meet. We know obviously that parents must come first and that children are to be submissive to them in obedience. And we know that masters are those who have servants in submission to them.

And yet as we read through this chapter and on into chapter six, the Apostle Paul begins with women, then men, turns to children and then fathers and finally begins with servants before masters.

So yes, as we go through these messages I will be pointing back to verse 21 as an overriding principle.

- In ALL of these relationships we are to be “submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

And as we will see in all the practical applications we will come to, Jesus is our great example as demonstrated in Philippians 2: “5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 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.”

That is the ultimate picture of submission and continuing on in that passage we see that submission is not a bad thing to learn and practice:

9 “Therefore [why is it therefore?

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

- And of course our Biblical submission is always for Christ’s sake!

And Jesus also teaches us another important principle about submission: Perhaps the most difficult to learn...

- Biblical submission is NOT just submitting to things you already want to do or agree with!

True submission is what we see Jesus doing in the Garden during His heartfelt prayer to His Father: Luke 22: ““Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.””

- So we will be learning some practical lessons about submission for men & women, husbands & wives, children and parents along with servants and masters.

This brings us back to that first principle that we are to keep in mind: Where do we find the foundation for all of these relationships?

- That is right, in the Book of Beginnings.

As we covered in our message about racial tensions in our nation, it is there that we learn why all lives matter because we are all made in the image of God! It is also where we learn about the Fall of Man which is why we have so many problems now with these relationships and submission. It was not so from the beginning but now because of the hardness of our hearts we need the Spirit of God and the Law of God to restrain our sin. Genesis tells us that, “God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

- So now we have men & women and it has been so from the beginning, despite what our modern “experts” may try to tell us!

In Genesis 2, we have a bit more detail about how God brought woman from the side of man and we are told that, “24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

- In both chapters, and again after the flood, God commanded them to be fruitful, so now we have children in the picture.

And the final relationship that the Apostle will address in chapter six is servants and masters which relates to the commands to take dominion. As with all the other relationships, work is NOT part of the fall, but rather tainted by the Fall as man must now toil against the effects of the fall and yes, struggle with relations. So Lord willing, in the coming weeks we will consider the practical lessons that the Apostle Paul has for us about men & women, husbands & wives, children and parents and finally servants and masters. And let me point out that baptizing our new covenant members this morning should clearly remind us that these lessons are important. Those parents and us as their helpers have pledged, before God, to raise these children in the fear and admonition of the Lord!

- Those pledges and the instructions we have from the Apostle Paul give are very important because living the Christian life is not something that happens automatically!

We must remember that the Lord is telling His story and that in it He has chosen to not just zap us with salvation and then take us straight to heaven! This Epistle to the Ephesians did not end with the glorious presentation of the Good News, in the early chapters, but goes on into our sanctification.

Jesus came as the light of the world and the Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is now challenging us to walk as children of the light in some very practical ways... Ephesians 5 began with “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.” And as we move through all these areas of submission in the Christian life we are always going to be looking to Jesus as our example, and we will always see Him as the Grand example of the Light we are to walk in.

Communion Meditation:

Ephesians 5 “17 “Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.”