

## Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5

**“5 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them. 8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light... 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 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, & Christ will give you light.” 15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 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.”**

# **"Submitting One to Another"**

When last we studied this passage in our journey through Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, we considered his warnings about grieving the Holy Spirit & the importance of forgiveness.

- At bottom we learned that as new men we are to walk in the light!

**Ephesians 5: “7 Therefore do not be partakers with them. 8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light...”**

The Apostle drew the important contrast between our new life and what we have left behind...

A clear contrast between the light and darkness, something easy to understand but also VERY profound.  
*[discuss turning on the light in a dark room]*

He told us in verse 11 to, “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.”

- And we expose them by being those who walk in the light?  
*[curse the darkness or turn on the light?]*

**12 “For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.”**

- And how do we walk in the light? Well once again that which is impossible for man is possible for God!

**14 Therefore He says: “Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, & Christ will give you light.”**

- Our new life, which is a life of walking in the light, is a resurrection life, something we simply cannot produce on our own or in our own strength!
- Pastor Liberati made a strong case for our conversions being a miraculous work of God last week and we will keep that in mind in our applications for this morning!

And coming to our morning text, the Apostle wants us to 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.”

- Now if we speak about submission in the Christian life today...  
What usually comes to mind?

That’s right we need to have all those women submitting to their husbands!

- We will certainly get to that important command, but it is sad how that gets so much attention as folks pass right over our morning text which speaks about submitting one to another!

Does that mean that husbands are to be submitting to their wives as well?

How about parents submitting to their children or masters to their slaves?

Well since children & parents, husbands and wives, slaves and masters, men and women can all be Christians there must be some sense or application of this if we are to be “submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

- The theme of submitting to one another is the introduction to the next major section of Ephesians!

There we will consider submission in all areas of our lives, from marriage and family to life here in the Church, to the work place and our businesses.

Pastor Doug Wilson addressed this a piece he published this past week where he shows the importance of such Biblical obedience in all these areas of life: He said in part:

“Having been forgiven, having been put right, what are we to do then? What practical things can we do in order to make a difference? The answer to this question is the thing that humbles us. We cannot know the ways in which God will weave together all the details of human history into the most beautiful story that has ever been told. We know that He will do exactly that, but we don’t know how He will do it. And we don’t even know the nature of most of the subplots. We know that Christ crucified and risen is at the center of the great story, because He has told us that part, and we know that the story is a comedy, not a tragedy. The story begins in a garden, and ends with a garden city. It begins with a simple wedding in a garden, and it ends with a magnificent royal wedding in that garden city. We do know that much, again because we were told. So you see America teetering on the brink of the Abyss, and you want to know what you can do? Here’s is what God calls us to do, and this is how we cooperate with Him as His willing sons and daughters.

*[or as the Apostle said, how we walk in the light, submitting to one another in the fear of God!]*

“You want to save America? Here’s the plan. This is the play we need to run, on three. Love your wife. Respect and obey your husband. Control your temper. Stop drinking so much. Learn to be as precise and as honest in your business dealings as a person can be. Get your kids a Christian education. Bring your family to church, every week bring them to church. Throw yourself into your Bible reading. Sing psalms. Laugh at the theocratic pretenses of mortal men. Eat the fat and drink the sweet. Mow your lawn. Have a cold beer afterwards... Again, on three.” *[certainly not my quote with that beer at the end!]*

- But I hope you can see how Pastor Wilson gives a great picture with lots of examples about how to apply submitting one to another!
- Actually, our obligations, if we are to be those who walk in the light by living the Christian life day by day.

In my next few messages we will see how this works out with husbands and wives, how it impacts our understanding of the Church, the Body of Christ.

We may even have to touch on self-esteem and of course there are lessons for both parents and children.

We will see how we are to approach our labors if we have jobs and our responsibilities if we are employers.

- Now for this morning I am going to jump to the end of these applications!

I want to discuss and consider the final point which the Apostle makes at verse 9 of Chapter six regarding submission:

**“9 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.”**

- So yes, even if you are the boss you are under the command to be submitting one to another!

So why did I skip to the final application this morning?

As I mentioned Pastor Liberati told us about the miracle of conversion last week using Levi the tax collector as his example in the text from Mark, showing how his conversion changed his life & that of those around him.

He also mentioned another tax collector by the name of Zacchaeus and I want to use what Luke tells us about his conversion to illustrate what the Apostle refers to in submitting one to another.

- I thought it would be good to do so while we have all those tax collectors fresh in our minds.

Pastor Liberati gave us a good deal of background on how folks saw those tax collectors and it should remind us about how average folks back then hated the oppression and cruelty of Rome, much as many do what has become the American Empire today.

- God told the Saints that Rome would be crushed, and it was, but just how did that happen?
- How did the Saints go from being just a few Disciples in distant Judea to dominating the Roman world by the time of Constantine?

That required a lot of light and that is what the Saints brought as they learned submission in all areas of life. *[what made Christianity legal]*

With that in mind let me turn to the other tax collector that Jesus saved and consider what the impact of his actions might have been on others... We know his story from Luke 19:

**“Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. 2 Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. *[two strikes against him in the eyes of others]***

**He was also short, 4 “So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” 6 So he made haste and came down, & received Him joyfully. 7 But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, “He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.” *[sound familiar to last week?]***

**8 Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”**

**9 And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; 10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”**

- So as we saw last week, Jesus came to save the lost, not the found, to heal the sick not the healthy.

So how does Zacchaeus help us understand the practice the submitting to one another as one of those masters in his new life?

Francis Schaeffer stressed that America suffered under two great sins: That of chattel property slavery and the non-compassionate use of accumulated wealth.

We see examples of both here in the life of Zacchaeus... He was both wealthy and oppressive. Notice that he was SO wealthy that he could give away half of what he had and still have enough to make restitution to those he had wronged.

He was certainly a man who had kept building bigger and bigger barns to hold his wealth rather than consider his eternal soul and the care of others.

- So as a converted man who is now walking in the light, Zacchaeus becomes a generous man but also a just man.

Jesus does not tell Zacchaeus to leave his hated profession but to change his practices, as John the Baptist instructed the tax collectors who came to him in repentance along with some the soldiers.

*[another not so favored class in that time]*

Luke 3: “7 Then [John] said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 9 And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees.

Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” *[obviously made folks nervous]* 10 So the people asked him, saying, “What shall we do then?” 11 [John] answered and said to them, “He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.”

- We saw a practical application of this in the life of Zacchaeus when he gave away half of his wealth!
- Next, we see why the restitution that Zacchaeus made was also important when John the Baptist turns to his hated profession:

12 “Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” 13 And he said to them, “Collect no more than what is appointed for you.”

Zacchaeus knew he had wronged many by collecting too much, so yes at times taxation can be theft, and thus he makes a four-fold restitution! The next example Luke provides is also instructive:

14 “Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, “And what shall we do?” So he said to them, “Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.””

John did not tell them to leave the military, but rather to serve in the way that the Apostle Paul instructs masters here in Ephesians: ““9 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.”

Now I mentioned how the Saints walking as those now in the light brought the dramatic changes we saw in history as Christendom replaced the evil empire of Rome

- When you think about it, perhaps the changes in converted tax collectors and Roman soldiers would have had the greatest impact of all.
- Tax collectors that were fair and soldiers that were kind would likely have gotten everyone’s attention and that attention would mean that light was shining in the darkness.

Now we are blessed to have a number of business owners and bosses or supervisors in our midst and they will each have to take these lessons back to their places of business to see what should be applied so they can walk as those in the light.

**It might be easier to see the changes made in the world by those tax collectors and soldiers, but as Pastor Wilson rightly pointed out, God's story is woven together with all the little parts of the story and that is why we must always be faithful.**

**As we consider what is needed to restore Christian culture and civilization so the Kingdom can advance, we will need politicians and soldiers and even tax collectors as we have seen this morning!**

**And God may well call some of us into those professions and we should be prepared to serve there well. But we must also remember that our actions as individuals, in our homes and marriages and in our families and jobs or professions are also very important places where we must always submit one to another as we walk in the light.**

**So as we consider what it means to walk in the light submitting to one another we can reflect on some of the closing words the Apostle left with Titus:**

**Titus 3: "8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.... 14 And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful."**

**May the Lord help us to always be those who walk in the light, submitting to one another in the fear of God.**

**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."**