

“The Heart of Submission”
Ephesians 5:21
(Preached at Trinity, August 9, 2015)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. For two chapters Paul has been instructing his readers on demonstrating with their lives the reality of their Christian conversion. He is stressing the infinite difference between the believer and the unbeliever. It is the difference of night and day, of darkness and light.
Ephesians 5:8 NAU - "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light"
2. Our salvation was a work of God alone, apart from any work on our part. We contributed nothing to it. But the Christian life demands great effort on our part, but it is not *merely* a human work. The New Testament sets forth a careful balance of human effort empowered by the Holy Spirit.
3. This is at the heart of the passage beginning with **Verse 18**
Ephesians 5:18 NAU - "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit"
4. Paul sets forth in this very practical section what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. What affect does it have upon your life? What does the Spirit filled life look like? Paul's chief focus in this passage is on our interpersonal relationships. He begins on our relationships within the body of Christ.
5. Last time we focused on **Verses 19-20** as we examined the music of the NT church. Music plays an important part within the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit has transformed the music of the church. Our music is a wonderful display of the work of Christ in the Gospel.
6. Now, beginning with **Verse 21** Paul begins a lengthy section with a focus upon submission. He is continuing in the context of **Verse 18** and life in the Spirit. **Verse 21** actually serves as a transition verse introducing a much larger section describing how the Holy Spirit leads us in submission to one another. Christianity is transforming.
 - It transforms the relationships of husbands and wives
 - It transforms the relationships of children and parents
 - It transforms the relationship of masters and servantsWilliam Gouge – “He is no good Christian that is careless in these matters. A bad husband, wife, parent, child, master, servant, magistrate, or minister is no good Christian.”
7. It all begins with the transforming work of God in the salvation of a sinner. Paul has been describing this transformation.
Ephesians 5:8 NAU - "you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light"

8. This transformation humbles us and makes us submissive—to God and to our fellow man. This morning I want to begin this section dealing with submission.
- I. Christianity is marked by self-denial
- A. Our old self is both dead and dying
1. On one hand the old self is forever gone
Romans 6:6 NAU - "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with"
Galatians 2:20 NAU - "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."
Colossians 3:2-3 NAU - "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."
 2. On the other hand, the Christian life is one of continual self-discipline
1 Corinthians 9:27 NAU - "I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."
 3. Christianity is a life of denying self for the sake of Christ
Ephesians 5:21 NAU - "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."
Matthew 16:24-25 NAU - "Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵ "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."
- B. Self-denial is a renunciation of everything that isn't to the glory of God and the highest good of our fellow men – and one of the most difficult parts of the Christian life.
1. Self-denial is the death of selfishness – but we must continually give diligence in it. Paul reminds Christians:
Philippians 2:3-4 NAU - "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."
 - a. In our lost state everything was about self – it was the beginning and end of all that we did
 - b. We did everything to our own glory.
Our own happiness was the motivation for all that we did for God, and all that we did for our fellow men.
 - c. Men who do not seek the things of Christ seek the things of self
 2. The supreme difference in the Bible between true religion and false religion is that one is inherently fleshly and selfish while the other is inherently self-denying. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in us
 3. The lost man rejects Christ for self while the Christian rejects self for Christ

- C. Salvation brings a rich work of God's grace upon our hearts
1. It gives us a higher interest than our own self-interest
We gladly bend our interests to the interests of the Kingdom of our Lord.
 2. We have found a higher love, a greater love – we have found Christ
He has captivated our heart, our affections.
 3. Christ is worth everything – the Christian gladly gives all for Christ
No action is too difficult, no duty too great, no gift is too dear to give to Christ
- D. We have found a love that brings us to seek something beyond ourselves
The Christian willfully sacrifices himself
1. Everything is cheerfully forsaken for the cause of Christ
 2. Our own interests are cheerfully forsaken for the cause of others
Ephesians 5:21 NAU - "and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."
 3. We gladly live in submission to one another
F.F. Bruce – "Reciprocal submission is a basic element in Christian ethical tradition."
- E. Remember, Christianity is a marvelous transformation
1. We have been transformed from darkness to light
 2. But we are being continually drawn back to the darkness
 3. Submission is always difficult. We naturally recoil against authority
- II. What drives the heart of submission?
- A. The goodness and mercy of God in our conversion
1. That God would save someone as wretched as me is most humbling
 2. We are naturally proud. We think we deserve all good things. We want the world to focus upon us. We want all men to serve us.
 3. God's salvation humbles us. In spite of all our sin God loved us and sent His Son to die for us.
Romans 5:8 NAU - "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
- B. Second of all, submission is driven by the grace of regeneration
1. Lost humanity is naturally rebellious and naturally hates authority
Psalms 2:2-3 NAU - "The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ³ "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!"
 2. Regeneration gives us a submissive heart
This is at the heart of this passage – we learn the value of submission – first to God and then to those in authority over us.
 3. We are under various realms of authority – we must submit to them all
 - a. In this passage we'll see authority in the home. We'll also see the submission of the worker to the one in authority.

- b. The NT also teaches submission to civil authority
Romans 13:1-2 NAU - "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves."
1 Peter 2:13-15 NAU - "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. ¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men."
 - c. The NT also teaches submission to ecclesiastical authority
Hebrews 13:17 NAU - "Obey your leaders and submit *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 for you."
 - d. But ultimately we have a heart of submission to all of our brothers and sister in Christ—it is the willingness to allow all to rise above us.
- C. Thirdly, submission is driven by the fruit of love created in us by the Holy Spirit
1 Corinthians 13:4 NAU - "Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant"
- 1. The word for “brag” means “boasting or vain glory” – it’s the desire for all attention to be on you.
 The word for “arrogant” literally means to “to swell, puff up, or inflate” – to make yourself appear larger and more significant than you are.
 - 2. Self-love crowds out all other love. It focuses only on our desires, our ideas, our needs, our possessions. And we can be very competitive
 - a. This is why Christians can be very critical of others. We think others should think and act just like us.
 - b. Love puts us in service to others instead of believing they should satisfy us.
 Matthew Henry – “Here we find the mutual submission that Christians owe one to another, condescending to bear one another's burdens: not advancing themselves above others, nor domineering over one another and giving laws to one another.”
 - 3. With Christ as our model we learn to love
Ephesians 5:25 NAU - "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her"
 - 4. True love will bring a man to take his eyes off of himself. It will cause him to be humble.
Romans 12:10 NAU - "*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;*"

- D. And fourth, submission is driven by a heart of service
1. The lost man ultimately only serves himself, and he desires all other men to serve him. We want to be self-determining. We want to determine our own course, set our own agenda, do our own thing.
 2. Grace enables us to serve.
Calvin: "Where love reigns, there is a mutual servitude."
 3. We first of all are the servants of Christ. This is what we mean that Jesus is Lord. κύριος means Master.
 - a. Paul expressed this well in **Romans 1** by using the word δοῦλος "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ"
 - b. The heart of this world is to claim your "rights." The Christian is far more interested in our duties than our rights.
 - c. The servant of Christ obeys Him out of a sincere desire to be useful to Him. We love Him. We want to honor Him.
 4. But we must also see ourselves as the servant of others. We serve Christ by serving others.
Ephesians 5:21 NAU - "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."
Ephesians 5:22 NAU - "Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord."
Ephesians 6:1 NAU - "Children, obey your parents in the Lord"
Ephesians 6:5-6 NAU - "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; ⁶ not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."

Conclusion:

1. This is the Christian life. This is the Spirit-filled life. We become servants of one another. We live in submission to one another, each in his proper place.
2. But the highest duty is love. After commanding us to be in submission to the civil authorities Paul concludes:
Romans 13:7-8 NAU - "Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. ⁸ Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the law*."
3. All of this is fueled by the Holy Spirit. It demands much prayer.