



Marriage #2: 'Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ'

Ephesians 5: 18b-33

Introduction

The glaring piece in this passage is that men and women are given different instructions. They have roles in this covenant. One's the head, one submits. One loves, one respects. These are not bad words. They aren't explicatives. But the fact that some are assigned to men and others to women has created significant emotional volatility. They carry with them a ton of baggage and pre-conceived notion.

Depending on the culture in which Christianity is preached, it is either seen as radically subversive and liberating or horribly reactionary and conservative. The Gospel doesn't change, the instructions don't change, but the posture of the recipients affects how it is heard. So in a society or country with an oppressive government or leader, Christianity is seen as subversive. And it's true because the church has always challenged the idea that the state is the final moral arbiter.

But in this country and others in the west, the church is often seen as horribly reactionary. And that's true because the church has always challenged the fact that the individual is the final moral arbiter. This passage is radically subversive in some societies and rigidly reactionary in others. Same words, different recipients.

I have had fun coaching soccer this fall. One of the things we teach young players is how to dribble down the field and then shoot or pass without stopping. Because if you stop, back up, it's easy for someone to steal the ball. I want to do the opposite today. Before we get to the explosion of v.22, I want to back up to v 18 and see how Paul is setting the stage for these profound words on the mystery of marriage. *Open bible, paper, pen. We need to get more technical this week.*

Be Filled with the Spirit

A few weeks ago we learned that Paul makes a bold exhortation at the beginning of chapter 5. His instruction is to 'Be Imitators of God'. People who imitate God walk in love, walk in the light, and walk in wisdom. They don't sell out for cheap counterfeits like false intimacy, selective vulnerability, or passively checking out. Impossible to do on our own. So he bookends that whole section with this command-- be filled with the Spirit. Be Imitators of God BY being filled with the Spirit. God on the inside can help us imitate God on the outside.

How?

The question I didn't answer is how. How are we filled with the Spirit? I'm just going to give a painfully brief answer right now so that we can keep moving forward. **We are filled with the Spirit by asking God to do it.**

- > Everyone who turns to Jesus as their rescuer, forgiver, and leader gets the Holy Spirit. This is what Peter preached in Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- > But Paul is using 2 significant grammar things--
 - the present tense, which has the sense of 'continually'. Be continually filled.
 - And the middle voice. The middle voice is critical to getting the sense and nuance of this passage. If you use the active voice-- you are doing it: I am filling (I am continuously filling). If you use the passive voice-- it is being done to you: I am continuously being filled. If you use the middle voice, there is a sense of cooperation, you are doing it to yourself. I am continually filling myself.

I am doing it, but I am also receiving it. So the most literal translation of this verse-- continuously fill yourself with the Spirit. It is the middle voice that speaks volumes of dignity and worth. Because you are choosing something for yourself.

- > This you have to do everyday. God fill me with your Spirit. As you fill, push out all the other junk that will compete for my affection, that will want my attention, that will want to lead me or distract me. As Nicky Gumbel in the Alpha course says, its the difference between a pilot light and a gas furnace. If you are following Jesus, you have the pilot light, but from the middle voice, WE can roar it into flame-- fill me, consume me, lead me, guide me. But its not passive. It won't just happen. You must choose, you must yield. The beauty of it is if we ask God will always do it. And If we do continuously fill with the Holy Spirit, we have the power to imitate God.

5 Participles of Result

If we are filled, Paul lists the consequences in verses 19-21. Paul employs 5 participles. Now hang with me for one more grammar explanation. A participle is a verbal adjective-- meaning it has qualities of verbs and qualities of adjectives. The main verb is 'be filled'. All 5 ptc are modifying it. There are 7 or 8 different meanings for a ptc, in english we use helping words like while, because, so that.

These are 5 participles of result, meaning-- IF you are filled with the Spirit, THEN this will happen to you. Important: This is the consequence to being filled. The distinction is important. These aren't things that you are hoping for, or if you are really filled then this might happen. The participle of result is used to indicate the actual outcome or result of the main verb. The volitional part of these verses is the end of v 18 and the middle voice-- If you choose to continually fill yourself with the Holy Spirit, then this is the result

- > **Addressing** one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs: we douse each other with Scripture. we cling to the words God has given us to reveal what is truly life and these are the things we use to address each other. If we are filled with the Spirit, then the Lord is a part of every conversation.
- > **Singing and making melody** to the Lord with your heart: Individually something is released in us when we sing. We are able to combine intellect with emotion. Something happens corporately when we sing-- you can sometimes feel it. Scripture says that the Lord inhabits the praises of His people (Ps 22.3). We will be singing and you feel this multiplying effect-- you are giving your all, and God is giving back, and there is a deep connection to Him. There is an energy in the room that is more than a sum of our parts.
- > **Giving Thanks** always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: God reminds you of what He has done. The places where you feel lack and want seem less important. Your perspective changes.
- > **Submitting** to one another out of reverence for Christ:
 - submit: 'to accept or yield to a superior force or to the authority or will of another person.
 - 'to cause to be in a submissive relationship, to subject, to subordinate.'
 - Huge clarification: 'submitting' is again in the middle voice. He leans on the dignity of volition. I am continually submitting myself to others who are continually submitting themselves out of reverence for Christ.



We choose to be filled with the Holy Spirit, with the result that we choose to submit ourselves to others in the church. Submission comes with the salvation package. By its very nature, if you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you are choosing to yield your life to a higher power that has authority over you. This is what happens to Spirit-filled people. You can't muster them up or try harder. This is what comes with the package.

To whom do we submit?

You will notice that the passage gets very personal.

- > The church submits to Christ
- > The church submits to each other.
- > Then wives submit to husbands, children submit to parents, and slaves submit to masters.

Most of us are really ok with abstract submission. It comes with the package of living in a society-- we submit to laws, to rules, to leaders we elect, to nature, to illness, to death. When those things are abstract and out there and seemingly out of our control, We can build rapport with others by complaining about those who are in charge-- isn't this a stupid law, can you believe this person in office did this, I wish our CEO would make a different choice.

This is not instruction to submit to someone 'out there'. I want to look at why we submit to Christ and why we submit to each other.

Why do we submit to Christ? Tell your neighbor one reason

The church submits to Christ because Christ is the head of the church

1. Head, kephale. 2 meanings:
 - a. a being of higher status, superior rank, with delegated authority;
 - b. but also the source, as in headwaters.
 - c. We see this dual meaning in our word authority-- it can denote someone who has been granted a higher status (like a policeman, a judge, elected official). But also the word author is nestled in there. Someone has authority if they are the source. So if we have questions about what a poem means and the author walks in to the room-- we are going to ask her, because she wrote it. She is the source, the authority for her poem. **Authority can be delegated or it can be inherent.**
2. Jesus has both in relation to the church.
 - a. **Delegated:** God the Father has delegated authority to Jesus.
 - i. God seated Him in the heavenly places, **Eph. 1:21** far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. **22** And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, **23** which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.
 - b. **Source:** Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith. He is the source of our salvation. The church exists because Jesus rescued it.



- i. **Eph. 4:15** Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.
- c. **Jesus is our head.** From these passages we see that Jesus uses his headship, to grow the church into maturity. Jesus uses every shred of his power, his influence, his creativity to get us ready to meet God, to make us look more like him.

Personal Story: I told the story of my parents being late to pick me up from band practice and that lead to a friendship with John Sweeney, that lead me to my fraternity, that lead me to make an adult decision to follow Jesus, that lead me to meet Will Gaskins, that lead me to get a call from John Yates, that lead me to this church-- and that if you have been blessed by this church, then my parents were late to pick me up for you. **Jesus is fabulously committed to getting you ready to meet God.**

Our head is committed to our good so we submit to Jesus.

The church submits to Christ because He submitted Himself to us for our good. He gave Himself up. He sacrificed Himself for our good.

When Jesus told the story of the good shepherd, he said, I lay down my life for the sheep. **I(!!) lay down my life.**

John 10:15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

John 10:17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. **18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."**

In the Bible, se submit to a person, for their good: to empower them, to build them up. Jesus did this first.

All the consequence of our bad choices, he took on himself. He willingly died the death we should have died. But he also gave up everything He had in heaven. He was there at creation. He was a part of a community of perfection.

It would be like you selling your house, your cars, your vacation property, your bike, your clothes... Then using the money to set up a training center for immigrants, to help them know how to live life to the fullest, to help them have a new identity. But in order to live among them, you also give up your degrees-- your masters, your PhD, your perfect english. You live among them. You love them. You eat with them. You talk like them. You give them hope. You identify with them. So much so that when the authorities come, you don't have a passport or an id or contacts in the administration, or educational background or any protection. In fact, one of those immigrants who seemed so appreciative actually pushes you forward, says-- take him. You're treated badly, mocked because of your accent, you don't understand what's going to happen next.

He submitted to you. To me. He gave up all his rights. This was the mind of Christ:



Phil. 2:6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

What does it mean to submit?

Jesus submitted himself once, for your good, to rescue you. Now he is the one who leads. What does it mean to submit to Him? **You're in charge Jesus.** You are worthy of this. We trust you. You know what is best for us. We expect Jesus to direct our steps, to give us words and instructions that are life-giving, that he will confront us when we are wrong, and comfort us when we are down. We submit to Jesus because He is God and because he is perfect and there is no better place for us to put our trust.

How do we submit to each other?

Not only are we supposed to submit to Christ, we are called to submit to each other.

Phil. 2:3-4 Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

How do 2 people submit to each other? How do you count others more significant? It almost sounds comical-- you go, no you go, no you go, no you go.

“put others in line in front of yourself.”

Have you ever been knee deep in the middle of preparing a meal and suddenly you realize you forgot something. You must have it, but it's 5:10, the kids are starting to melt down, so you call your spouse and ask them to pick it up on the way home from work. Just one thing-- a carrot-- at 5:15. The spouse walks in and the place is packed-- many of them folks who did not have a spouse kind enough to stop on their way home and have had to drag their hungry kids to the store after a day of school. You sprint in, grab a carrot and head for the checkout line. Which one do you choose? The rookie will head to the express line and will soon discover there are 10 people ahead of him all holding 2-3 things to checkout. The veteran scans the aisles, finds the person with the fullest cart, stands behind them, plaintively holding a carrot. The full cart looks at your pitiful excuse for a shopping trip and says, “**Hey, you go ahead of me, you only have one thing to buy...**” Now by all logic, that person, who has already spent an hour in the store finding what they need has every right to go ahead of you, who has only spent 2 minutes getting your carrot. But when they invite you to go on ahead, it is not from unusually low self-esteem or subservience that causes them to issue the invitation. No, just the opposite. They are so at peace with who they are that a loss of a few more minutes is seen in the larger context. They feel good enough about themselves, they can do you a favor. They focus on your interests for a few minutes, not because they are weak, but because they are strong. They let go of their rights and grasp generosity. In a very practical way, they submit to you.

2 problems with this idea:

1. If you put everyone first, you'll never get out of line. How do we discern the right carrot opportunities?

2. There will be lots of times you don't feel like it. I'm sick of letting other people go first. When is it my turn?

This is why Paul begins the section with 'be filled with the Holy Spirit.' He will give you wisdom about which carrots should go before you. He will give you endurance to continually let others go first. You cannot do this apart from God living in you.

1. Biblical submission is always for another person's good, to serve them, to see them empowered, to see them mature.
2. Biblical submission comes from our Spirit filled capacity, not from our empty dregs. It is from a posture of generous dignity that we can put someone else ahead of us.
3. Biblical submission out of reverent fear of Christ can never be demanded, it can only be earned, it can only be given. **It can only come from the middle voice--** I choose to fill myself with the Holy Spirit with the result that I choose to submit myself to others.

Making it real-- some practical applications

The rest of chapter 5, into the first half of chapter 6 provides 3 very specific illustrations of submission. Wives submit to husbands, children submit to parents, and slaves submit to masters. Not only does he give different instructions to wives and husbands, he lumps wives, children, and slaves together. Pretty unpalatable. Notice this:

Before we look at different roles, I wanted you to see that husbands and wives get the same instruction first. They submit to each other out of reverence for Christ. They continually look for opportunities to the other one first in line.

I recognize that marriage adds a unique dimension to submission. We submit to another human being, and particularly to one whom we ourselves have selected and promised to love. **It is submission not to anything external or imposed, but only to what we ourselves have chosen with our whole hearts.**

Christ as the Head of the church

As always, Jesus is our model. He has chosen you. He loves you. Thus we submit to Him, who is our head. If you don't get that you are submitted to One who dearly loves you, who chose you, you don't get the passage. Doesn't matter if you are married, used to be married, want to be married, married again. If you are filled with the Spirit, then Christ loves you. When you are in love, there are some common traits:

1. When you are in love... You look at the person with intense delight. Jesus thinks about you, He writes your name on his desk, He carries your picture in His wallet, He talks about you, He notices your wins, He mourns your losses. He looks at you with intense delight.
2. When you are in love... You love someone with 'in spite of' love. You've heard it-- she's dating him... What does she see in him.
 - > Most mature and most immature love look a lot alike.
 - Immature-- don't you see the flaws? But you don't understand, I see his heart. She sees the heart but not the blemishes
 - Mature-- you see what no one else sees, but you see the blemishes as well.



- Jesus says, I love you 'in spite of'. I see the glorious person you are going to be in me. He loves you in spite.
- 3. When you are in love, You do everything for them.
 - c. You used to just make money, now you make money for him
 - d. You swore you'd never go fishing, now you're learning to fly cast in your apt parking lot for her.
 - e. Jesus didn't die for an abstraction. He died for you. When our prayers come up, he isn't surprised-- oh an email from David. I wonder how he's doing... He knows.
- 4. When you are in love, You fall under the authority of that love. You submit yourself to it.
 - c. If you're in love with someone here in DC, you can't just move to LA. Someone with a vested interest in that decision
 - d. You can't just become a missionary in Thailand
 - e. You can't just register for an Ironman race...

You lose control when you fall in love. When the greatest person in the whole universe loves you, you really lose control. If you continuously fill yourself with the Holy Spirit, then God is a part of every conversation, you sing, you give thanks, and you submit to each other out of reverence for Christ. You submit to the one who delights in you and you put others in line before you. You are loved. Give yourself to the One who gave Himself for you.