

Series: Ephesians: *The Christian Mystery and Mission*

Week 22

CDOBC – beginning on 2/6/11

Title: “The Submitting Church”

Ephesians 5:21 ~ August 21, 2011

OBJECTIVE: To help believers know the blessing of submission, and to submit to one another.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- Summer BBQ's – this Saturday – sign-up in courtyard
- Men's & Women's Bible Studies beginning in September
- All-Church YMCA Social – next Sunday

Opening Prayer - *pray for Sadie Johnson as she goes to boot camp on Wed. – Air Force*

Submission is not a friendly term in our modern day culture. What I mean by that is our society does not hold up submission as a worthy virtue to pursue. It sees submission as a weakness, as a feeble position. Instead of submission, our culture promotes and values prideful independence. The message in our culture at large is that:

You need to have confidence...

You need to be strong...

You need to be independent...

You need to stand on your own two feet...

You need to be the best...

You need to have a 'take-no-prisoners' attitude...

You need to outperform everyone else...

You need to be *yourself*...

You need to pursue what makes you happy...

You need to live life according to your own rules...

You need to look out for #1...

You need to look good...

You need to feel good...

You need to do everything you can to be successful.

In certain applications, some of these things are valid. But instead of seeing these motivations in their limited applications, our culture has made them into the model for one's attitude and practice for life.

These are the characteristics for the modern, American individual, and when someone lives with these as their guiding ethical standards for life, then a prideful, arrogant, and selfish person will emerge...someone who is primarily interested in their success in their career and relationships...in their happiness.

But this life philosophy goes against the Christian lifestyle. Jesus gave us an ethical and moral foundation for our life in The Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount. Later in His ministry, Jesus told us the greatest command for us to obey was: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Matt. 22:37-39

Both of those passages speak of the discipline we need to have with regard to our attitudes and our actions. The Christian ethic is the highest ethic because it doesn't simply demand physical obedience to the standards of God, but demands a transformation of our mind to the standards, righteousness and love of God!

Our verse today is another piece to the ethical and moral life of the Christian. It's a piece that is crucial for the society at large to operate as intended, and it's a piece that allows every human institution and agency to function in harmony and at its greatest efficiency. From the nation – down to individual families,

submission is a vital ingredient. Try to imagine life without submission. Try to imagine:

- A nation where nobody submitted to the laws of the land
- Soldiers that refuse to submit to their commanding officers
- Police officers that never submit to the instructions of the Police Chief
- Christians ignoring the leadership in their local church
- Students refusing to submit to their teacher's guidance
- Children who refuse to submit to their parents
- A football team that didn't submit to their coach's direction

We need submission. but the word submission is a very negative word in our culture's vocabulary – even in the vocabulary of many Christians. Why? In part due to leaders who have abused their position and responsibility of leadership. But I believe it's mostly due to our own pride and selfish mentalities.

Ephesians 5:21

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Today, I want to help us see the beauty and purpose of submission – and I hope to do that by looking at three aspects of this verse – and primarily by looking at Jesus Himself – and His submission which serves as a great example for us.

Our model of submission

Since so many in our culture and the Church have such a negative view of submission, I want to establish a baseline truth – that submission is a good thing...and that we must associate submission with God's character and His blessing to us – not as a necessary evil in human society.

First, we must realize that submission is an integral part of the Triune God. God models submission for us in the Trinity. There is submission of the Son (Jesus) to the Father (*i.e. in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Not my will, but Thy will”*), and the Holy Spirit submits to the will of the Father and the Son. This does not mean that the Father is more important or better than the Son or the Spirit – but it means that even within the Godhead, there is submission because of love and because of the roles each person in the Godhead has. The different roles and the submission those roles require within the Godhead in no way infer that there is any difference in the essence or nature of the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. Each is equally God, yet there is a hierarchy within the Triune God that submission is an integral part of. So, the first point that helps us see that submission is a good thing is that God models submission within the Trinity.

Second, submission was part of God’s perfect creation. The sinless, perfect creation modeled submission on various levels. Submission is not a result of the fall in the Garden of Eden, but it was part of God’s order within creation *before* sin entered the world. We see in Gen. 1:28 that there was an inherent submission in creation order in the hierarchy of humanity over the rest of creation, and we see in Gen. 2:18-25 that submission was part of the sinless beginnings of Adam and Eve’s life as husband and wife.

Sin did not introduce submission, sin corrupted submission.

Our challenge is to recapture the original state and intent of submission, and put it into practice. So...don’t associate

‘submission’ with something that is bad, evil, unfair, or sexist. Now I realize that submission and positions of authority can be abused, and this can be your experience with those you are supposed to submit to – but I’m trying to establish a baseline for you – a baseline that shows submission is not the problem...sin is the problem, and wherever sin has taken root, what God intended to be good and joyful for us is turned into something painful and hurtful.

So, our baseline is that submission is *not* a result of sin, but submission is a good thing – something God has modeled in the Trinity, and in the original – Edenic (sinless) creation order.

Our mutual submission vs. 21b

“...to one another”

Definitions of Submission: *hup-tasso*

To place under, be subject to; to put myself into subjection, to become a servant, to subordinate myself to another

The word had a military usage: To place or rank under, to subject, to obey

Jesus is certainly a model of submission, but He also helps us realize that no matter what position of authority you may have, God calls you to submit to others – even if you have authority over them.

Some critics have pointed to Galatians 3:28 – and our verse today – as proof that there are no gender roles or positions of authority within the Church or family. They say that mutual

submission – by its very nature - negates any position of authority.

Galatians 3:28

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

They are wrong on two fronts. **First**, they are interpreting Galatians 3:28 with an incorrect application. That passage is speaking of the universal invitation of salvation in Christ - that the Gospel is for all people. In addition, when a person puts their faith in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, they are a child of God...period! There are no second class children or citizens in the Kingdom of God! **Second**, mutual submission does not negate positions of leadership or authority. We see this most vividly in the upper room submission of Jesus.

Turn to John 13:14-15 – Read passage

“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. **15** I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”

Jesus submitted Himself – He served them, sacrificed for them, humbled Himself for the benefit of His disciples, without relinquishing His authority or role as Lord and Savior. Notice that after Jesus submits Himself and washes the feet of the disciples, He makes it clear that He has not set-aside His position of authority over them (“...I, your Lord and Teacher...”), but He maintains His role and position, yet He has submitted Himself to them and their need.

“Servanthood does not nullify leadership; it defines it.” (Sermon by John Piper, <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/lionhearted-and-lamblike-the-christian-husband-as-head-part-1>)

Other passages that show us Jesus' submission – His service to those who are obviously under His authority (Since He is God, everyone is under His authority!). The passage in Mark is especially instructive since it contrasts the ways of the world with the ways of the Kingdom.

Mark 10:42-45

“Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.⁴³Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,⁴⁴and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

The title “Son of Man” speaks to authority and dominion. This title has its roots in Daniel 7:13-14. In the N.T., this title is only used of Jesus - and when in Matt. 26:65-66, Jesus used it in reference to Himself during His trial before Caiaphas, the religious leaders instantly responded by accusing Jesus of blasphemy and that He deserved to die. Obviously, when Jesus says that the “Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” – He is describing His submission to the Father's will, and His serving us through the giving of His life – the ultimate expression of submission.

Submission is an application of humility.

Submission is impossible if you are a prideful person, but if you are filled with the Spirit (vs. 18b), it becomes possible.

The famous “Kenosis” passage in Philippians shows this same principle – that servant leadership defines Godly leadership, it doesn't abolish it. We see Jesus' submission to the plan of

God – to become flesh – but in vs. 3-8, then in vs. 9-11 we see the position and authority of Jesus on full display!

Phil 2:3-11

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!”

“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Submission does not negate leadership, authority, or God-given roles...it defines it!

Our motivation to submit vs. 21c

John Calvin states that *“nothing is more irksome to the mind of man than this mutual subjection.”*

Submitting to one another – especially submitting to those who according to our human pecking order are beneath us – those who don’t hold an equal or superior level of authority as we do – goes against our sinful tendencies toward pride, arrogance, and self-importance. This is truly a difficult command to obey.

So what motivates us to obey a command that our sinful human nature resists at every turn?

Answer: our fear/reverence for Christ

“...out of reverence for Christ.”

What does it mean to revere or fear Christ?

Prov. 8:13

“To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.”

2 Corinthians 5:10

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

1 Peter 1:17

“Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.”

“...fear/reverence of Christ” is understood in two ways. First, we need to recognize that Christ will judge us according to our obedience to His Word. This is not a judgment of your salvation; it’s a judgment of your obedience throughout your Christian life. Since submitting to one another goes against the grain of our human condition, which means we may not *feel* like submitting to one another, we need to know that Christ will judge our obedience to His command for us to submit, and so part of our obedience is to avoid His unfavorable judgment. That is the negative aspect of the “fear of Christ”. There is a more positive aspect – which relates more to the word ‘*reverence*’. Reverence brings to mind the many movies or books you might have read which shows a citizen who is granted an audience with the king. The citizen has done nothing wrong – so they don’t fear for their safety, but they want to do and say everything well, out of great respect and reverence not only due to the position of power the king occupies, but because the king is a good and wise king who truly loves his subjects. So, the citizen is motivated to please the king!

These two thoughts should be our motivation to submit to one another.

Application

Love and cherish submission

5:1 – “Be imitators of God” – submission is an integral part of the Trinity.

Submission allows society to function. Without submission, the organizational structures in society and family will fail.

Motivated by His love for the Father – and His love for us
- Jesus submitted Himself for our greatest blessing.

Repent of pride, selfishness

Pride and selfishness are the opposite of submission. The two cannot co-exist.

Pride is one of the sins God hates (Prov. 6:17), submission is part of His character and practice!

Submit to one another, out of reverence for Christ.

Close in prayer