

Sunday May 3rd 2009
To the Church of Ephesus – Part Twelve

1). Eph 5:15 *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.*

a). We see from our scripture then that we are to ‘walk circumspectly’ and we are to do this ‘not as fools, but as wise’.

b). The idea here has to do with the way we conduct ourselves throughout the course of our pilgrim journey and the phrase ‘walk circumspectly’ would be synonymous with the phrase ‘walking worthy’. ‘Walking’ then is used as a metaphor for how we live once we have become Christians.

c). Eph 4:1 ¶ *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,*

1Th 2:12 *that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.*

d). And in both of our scriptures here and in our opening scripture the way we walk, the way we are to live, has to do with our calling to be a firstborn son of God, as we look forward to the day when our calling may be realized.

e). In the Book of Job we see Satan, the god of this world walking about the earth as a symbol of his appointment to rulership - Job 1:7 *And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."*

f). And when God gives ‘the land’ to Abraham he is commanded to do the very same thing as a symbol of his impending rulership - Ge 13:17 *"Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you."*

g). The way we are to walk then should be in accord with our position as heirs of the Kingdom. We are to walk as those who are promised rulership in the future - Ro 4:13 *For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

h). And this is by no means in pride, arrogance or presumption, but in lowliness, humility and meekness – in fact, just like the King whose example we are to imitate - Php 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.

i). This is how the King walked in this present age in anticipation of His rulership in the age to come. And this is the result of His having done so –

Php 2:9 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.

j). This then is the pattern that we are to imitate - *Lu 9:23 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*

1Pe 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ²² "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; ²³ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;

k). It is the will of the Lord that Christ and His coheirs will rule the earth during the millennial Kingdom, and it is equally the will of the Lord that we conduct our lives after the pattern set by Christ during this present age. To do so would be ‘wise’, as we embrace the wisdom of God through faith, rather than the wisdom of the world – And part of this, of necessity, would include not being drunk with wine, not being intoxicated with the things of this world, but rather being continually filled with the Spirit.

l). In fact it is impossible to walk worthy of our calling, or be an imitator of God, or deny our self and take up our cross daily apart from being filled with the Spirit, apart from - *Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,*

m). It is only by the Spirit that our spirit man becomes strengthened – *Eph 3:16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;*

n). And it is only through the work of the Spirit that the metamorphosis can take place within us thereby enabling us to make the right choices so as to be an imitator God - *Ro 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

2). It is precisely then, because of being continually filled with the Spirit – which is synonymous with letting ‘the word of Christ’ dwell in us ‘richly in all wisdom’; and receiving with ‘meekness the implanted word’, ‘the word of His grace’, ‘the washing of water by the word’ – that the way we choose to relate to God and to others and to our circumstances will be determined. It is choosing to be faithfully obedient to that which we have received as we are ‘transformed by the renewing of your mind’, that will produce a tangible result - *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,*

3). And it is precisely as a result of being filled with the Spirit and only because of it, that we may embrace that which comes in the very next verse - *21 ¶ submitting to one another in the fear of God.*

a). ‘Submitting to one another in the fear of God.’ is one of the footprints in our walk during this present age that will demonstrate our worthiness to be a co-heir in the Kingdom in the age to come – Mt 18:2 *Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, 3 and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

b). And here we see that we are to ‘humble ourselves’ – it is a choice that we make with a Kingdom position in view. Humbling ourselves and submitting to one another would be two sides of the same coin. It is only in humility that submission can take place.

c). And contained in these, is the whole idea of either my way now, or God’s way now. As always it is a choice to faithful obedience - 1Pe 5:6 *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,*

d). So how are we to understand ‘submitting to one another’?

4). Well firstly, let’s just look at the words for the whole verse.

a). According to the scripture we are to submit to one another in a certain way – ‘in the fear of God’. Clearly then the implication is that we are to do this because firstly it is a command and also, secondly, because we should fear God if we don’t.

b). We can see how this works if we go to a scripture in - 1Pe 5:5 *¶ Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."*

c). We will look at this verse more closely later, but for the moment look at what we see in the second half of the verse. Being submissive to one another results in us being clothed with humility – a prerequisite of being an imitator of Christ in this present age and wedding garment material for the age to come.

d). And we need to be humble because God gives grace to those who are humble. This would be the grace to be clothed with humility rather than following our fleshly desire for self exultation.

e). And if we should choose not be submissive because of our pride, then we need to know that God will resist us. He will resist us now in order to bring us to a place of humility. And if we continue to refuse Him now, He will certainly resist us in that Day when we stand at His Judgment Seat. And we should realize also that in our refusal to submit to one another is a refusal to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. Any self exultation on our part in this area is exulting ourselves above the throne of God which if unchecked will have serious consequences.

f). The quotation used at the end of 1 Peter 5:5 comes from the Book of Proverbs - Pr 3:34 *Surely He scorns the scornful, But gives grace to the humble. 35 The wise shall inherit glory, But shame shall be the legacy of fools.*

g). Because of the structure of these two verses we can see that ‘the scornful’ are synonymous with those who are ‘fools’ – and their legacy in the age to come will be shame. The humble on the other hand are synonymous with ‘the wise’ – and they shall inherit glory in the age to come. I don’t think this could really be any clearer than this.

h). It is the wisdom of God that calls us to submission – to the natural mind, to the wisdom of Man, this is just foolishness - 1Co 1:21 *For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.*

i). The message preached, in this instance being submission, appears to be foolishness – the question is, do we believe what God has said?

j). Because according to our scripture it is those who do believe, and then put into practice that which they have believed, that will be saved.

5). So let’s try to understand the concept as it is presented scripturally, as the words ‘submit’ and ‘submissive’ have come to have very negative connotations in the parlance of this age. And considering what’s at stake here, the salvation of our soul, it’s not really surprising that they would become distorted in our thinking.

a). Our verse is translated like this in Young’s literal translation – Eph 5:21 *¶ subjecting yourselves to one another in the fear of God.*

b). Here we see the addition of the word ‘yourselves’ – ‘subjecting yourselves’ – which is the way the Greek language literally translates. And here is a valuable key to understanding how this is to take place.

c). The way this is written in the Greek language then makes it clear that we, as individuals, are entirely responsible for taking this action. We are to submit our self and then in that place of submission we are to put our self underneath the one we are to submit to. Submission is never something that is to be forced upon us by someone else.

d). We see then that this becomes an act of faithful obedience to the word of God, not taking the position of a door mat. If we were to see our self as a door mat in this situation then it should reveal to us that we really have no confidence in who we are in Christ, and that we have a crisis of confidence with regards to our calling.

e). Submitting = compound Greek word – ‘hupotasso’

‘hupo’ = a primary preposition; under, i.e. (with the genitive case) of place (beneath), or with verbs (the agency or means, through); (with the accusative case) of place (whither (underneath) or where (below) or time (when (at))):--among, by, from, in, of, under, with. In the comparative, it retains the same general applications, especially of inferior position or condition, and specially, covertly or moderately.

‘tasso’ = a prolonged form of a primary verb (which latter appears only in certain tenses); to arrange in an orderly manner, i.e. assign or dispose (to a certain position or lot):--addict, appoint, determine, ordain, set.

f). Literally then, ‘hupotasso’ means to arrange in an orderly manner underneath.

g). I am the one responsible for arranging my life in an orderly manner and then I am responsible for placing myself in an orderly arranged manner underneath the authority of the one I am to submit to. This is exactly how the scripture presents it. The one in authority is never to seek it or demand it, but rather receives it in humility.

6). Now we may in one sense understand submitting ourselves to one another in general, in line with what we read in - *Php 2:3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*

a). In this sense it is never about getting ‘my own way’, and it is never about I’m right and you’re wrong, but always being prepared to defer to our brother or sister – but never of course if it contravenes the truth of scripture.

b). On the other hand, however, there are specific commands from God with regards to who is to submit to whom.

c). And this is exactly how our Ephesians 5 scripture continues –
Eph 5:22 *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*

d). Now this is neither optional nor negotiable – so let's be clear.

e). The wife is to arrange every aspect of her life in an orderly fashion and then place herself under the headship of her husband. And she is to do this, 'as to the Lord' – which in reality is what happens. The wife acts in faithful obedience to the command of Christ and so her submission is really to the Lord, but is expressed through her relationship to her husband. The issue at hand then is one between the wife and the Lord, not between the wife and her husband. And the husband is never to demand his wife's submission.

f). We also see in our verse that the wife is to submit to her 'own husband'. All women are not subject to all men, and a wife is not subject to anyone else's husband. This involves the wife and her own husband and the Lord and there it ends.

g). Col 3:18 ¶ *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*

h). Wives are to submit to their own husbands as this is right, it is proper, it is fitting, in the Lord to do so. This from God's perspective is the correct thing to do.

i). And scripture shows us that the wife's submission is not to be determined by the action of her husband - 1Pe 2:18 *Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. 19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully..... 3:1 ¶ Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.*

7). Now the whole scriptural perspective on the wife's submission is presented with a clearly stated reason - Eph 5:23 *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.*

a). It is because 'the husband is head of the wife', in exactly the same way that 'Christ is head of the Church'. In response to the God appointed role as 'Head', the Church is to be subject to Christ and the wife is to subject to her husband. The husband is 'head' because it is the command of God that he be such. The only question for a husband in this area is how faithful am I being in that which God has commanded me to do?

b). And here we have it, it is in the symbolism of the marriage relationship that the wife's submission has its context as it points to and demonstrates the relationship between Christ and His bride.

c). In the same way that the 7 Feasts of Israel all symbolize aspects of Israel's relationship to God the Father with a view to rulership in the coming age and were to be faithfully kept by the nation as they looked to each feast's fulfillment, so marriage, within the context of the church, symbolizes our relationship with Christ with a view to rulership in the coming age and must also be kept faithfully by those who are married – not only for themselves, but because of what that relationship teaches to all who observe it as the eternally redeemed look to its fulfillment at the Judgment Seat.

d). So in the same way that the church is subject to Christ as its Head, the wife is to be subject to her husband as her head.

e). And by comparing scripture with scripture we see that both the husband and Christ are also subject to their Head - 1Co 11:3 *But I want you to know that the head of every man[husband] is Christ, the head of woman[wife] is man, and the head of Christ is God.*

f). So then as Christ is subject to His Head, God the Father, in faithful obedience – Joh 12:49 *"For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.*

g). So the husband is to be subject to his Head, Christ, in faithful obedience to the word of Christ and not on his own authority.

h). And the wife is to be subject to her head, her husband, in faithful obedience to the word of Christ and not on her own authority.

i). And the whole church is to be subject to Christ as their Head in faithful obedience to the word of Christ and not on their own authority.

8). So then we cannot separate the wife's submission to her husband, as is fitting in the Lord, from the husband's submission to Christ as his Head. The two must go hand in hand. With that in view look at what God commands next in our scripture - Eph 5:25 *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.*

a). Col 3:19 *Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.*

b). Let's take this backward and then come forward – Christ gave Himself, sacrificed Himself, died in the flesh, for the church with a view to the church being presented perfect at His Judgment Seat in fulfillment of the type of the Woman being presented to Adam in Genesis, all with a view to rulership.

c). And in the same way that Christ demonstrated His love for the church through sacrificing Himself, through dying in the flesh, for the church, so the husband is to love his wife.

d). This is neither optional nor negotiable either – it is a command written in the present continuous tense. Which means it is to happen and never stop happening.

e). We may never have made the connection here, but there is a direct correlation between the husband's action as an imitator of Christ as he sacrificially loves his wife and his wife being properly prepared for her appearance at the Judgment Seat.

f). Now this by no means takes away the wife's individual responsibility towards personal holiness, but it does allow for the possibility of the husband being guilty of his wife's blood at the Judgment Seat if he has refused to do for her that which Christ did for the church. Because in refusing to love his wife as Christ loved the church he is in fact refusing his God given role and responsibility and therefore refusing God. It is time to wake up to how serious this is.

g). Mt 18:4 *"Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child[the husband who submits to Christ's headship] is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 "Whoever receives one little child[his wife] like this in My name receives Me. 6 "But whoever causes one of these little ones[his wife] who believe in Me to sin,[to continually stumble because of his disobedience] it would be better for him[the husband] if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

h). Husbands, if we ever think that our relationship with our wife falls outside of our walking worthy and walking circumspectly and redeeming the time, or that we will not give an account for it at the Judgment Seat, then we need to think again, and quickly.

i). God in His infinite wisdom has given our wife into our care to nurture, under our headship, as a joint heir of the grace of life, with a view to the salvation of her soul. This is the most incredible responsibility.

j). What are we doing with what we have been given? Are we making a profit or have we buried it in the ground?

9). Eph 5:28 *So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and*

the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

a). And so the picture continues for us here.

b). Because the husband and wife are one flesh, which they are from God's perspective, if the husband, following the command of Christ, nourishes and cherishes his wife, so he is in God's economy also nourishing and cherishing himself. What he has invested in faithful obedience to the word in his relationship with his wife will then be profitable for both of them at the Judgment Seat.

c). And the pattern again for us to follow is the Lord nourishing and cherishing the church during this dispensation so that not only will those comprising the Church, those who have submitted themselves to Christ's Headship in faithful obedience, receive the salvation of their souls, but Christ will also, through His action of nourishing and cherishing, have made for Himself a wife to be His consort Queen - 2Pe 1:3 *as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

d). The thing to note is that, we as His potential Bride, respond to that which Christ has already done and continues to do. In the same way we would see the necessity for the husband to act in accordance with his appointment as head in order for his wife to choose to respond to it in faithful obedience.

e). The whole picture of marriage seen from the perspective of submission and headship is, according to our scripture, 'a great mystery' – a long held secret. And the secret is that it speaks 'concerning Christ and the church'.

f). V33 of Ephesians 5 then begins with the word 'nevertheless' – In other words, despite the fact that the picture given of the marriage relationship is about Christ and the church we are not to consider ourselves exempt from the practical application in faithful obedience to the command of scripture - *33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

g). If the Lord is willing we will continue next week.