

# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON CXVI : THE WISE AND SPIRIT FILLED LIFE OF SUBMISSION / THE HAUSTAFEL (5:15-6:9)

## **Ephesians 5:22-33 —**

<sup>15</sup> See, then, how exactly ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise, <sup>16</sup> redeeming the time, because the days are evil; <sup>17</sup> because of this become not fools, but — understanding what is the will of the Lord, <sup>18</sup> and be not drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the God and Father; <sup>21</sup> subjecting yourselves to one another in the fear of God.

<sup>22</sup> The wives! to your own husbands subject yourselves, as to the Lord, <sup>23</sup> because the husband is head of the wife, as also the Christ is head of the **assembly**, and he is saviour of the body, <sup>24</sup> but even as the **assembly** is subject to Christ, so also are the wives to their own husbands in everything.

<sup>25</sup> The husbands! love your own wives, as also the Christ did love the **assembly**, and did give himself for it, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it with the bathing of the water in the saying, <sup>27</sup> that he might present it to himself the **assembly** in glory, not having spot or wrinkle, or any of such things, but that it may be holy and unblemished; <sup>28</sup> so ought the husbands to love their own wives as their own bodies: he who is loving his own wife — himself he doth love; <sup>29</sup> for no one ever his own flesh did hate, but doth nourish and cherish it, as also the Lord — the **assembly**, <sup>30</sup> because members we are of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; <sup>31</sup> ‘for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and they shall be — the two — for one flesh;’ <sup>32</sup> this secret is great, and I speak in regard to Christ and to the **assembly**; <sup>33</sup> but ye also, every one in particular — let each his own wife so love as himself, and the wife — that she may reverence the husband. (Young’s Literal Translation, 1898)

**FLOW OF CONTEXT —** This section could be divided into two main thoughts: ‘wisdom’ (vv. 15-18) and ‘worship’ (vv. 19-21).

### **THEME 1: “WISDOM”**

<sup>15</sup> See, then, how exactly ye walk, [‘see’ = ye see, ye be careful – 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural present active imperative verb]

#### **FIRST CONTRAST: UNWISE vs. WISE**

*not as unwise, but as wise,*

<sup>16</sup> *redeeming the time, because the days are evil;*

#### **SECOND CONTRAST: BECOME NOT FOOLS vs. UNDERSTAND THE WILL OF THE LORD**

<sup>17</sup> *because of this become not fools, but — understanding what is the will of the Lord,*

#### **THIRD CONTRAST: (NOT BETWEEN TWO ENTITIES, WINE vs. SPIRIT BUT ...) DRUNKENNESS vs. SPIRIT-CONTROLLED**

<sup>18</sup> *and be not drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled with the Spirit,*

**THEME 2: “WORSHIP”** — This centers around five participles, each dependent upon ‘*be filled with the Spirit*’

<sup>19</sup> **speaking**

*one to another*  
*in psalms*  
*and hymns*  
*and spiritual songs,*

**singing and making melody**

*in your heart*  
*to the Lord,*

<sup>20</sup> **giving thanks**

*always for all things,*  
*in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*  
*to the God and Father;*

<sup>21</sup> **submitting yourselves**

*to one another*  
*in the fear of God.*

**“Household Code of Conduct”**

<sup>22-33</sup> *(husbands and wives)*

<sup>6:1-4</sup> *(children and parents)*

<sup>6:5-9</sup> *(servants and masters)*

**GENERAL PRINCIPLES —**

- **MUTUAL SUBMISSION** – ‘*to one another*’ (v. 21) – all believers are to serve one another
- **SUBMISSION = THE SOCIAL ORDERING OF PEOPLE** – we are to place ourselves under others
- **ORDER ≠ SUPERIORITY / INFERIORITY** – best and most obvious example is the Trinity
- **VOLUNTARY SUBMISSION** – we order ourselves under others as a choice, as a matter of our wills (not our emotions; we are to do this regardless of how we feel)
- **FOR CHRIST’S SAKE** – ‘*in the fear of God*’ (v. 21); ‘*as to the Lord*’ (v. 22); nowhere does Paul state for men to love their wives ‘*only if they are deserving of your love*’ or for women to respect their husbands ‘*only if they are deserving of your respect*’
- **COMES FROM A SPIRIT FILLED LIFE** – it all relates back to ‘*being filled with the Spirit*’ (v. 18)
- **ESSENCE OF AGAPE LOVE** – pride demands from others, humility and love gives of ourselves to others; *a proud, arrogant, self-seeking and self-willed demeanor is antithetical to the most basic precepts of Christianity!*
- **FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTIANITY** – this is found throughout the NT:

*'... whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'* (Mark 10:43-45 || Matt 20:26-28)

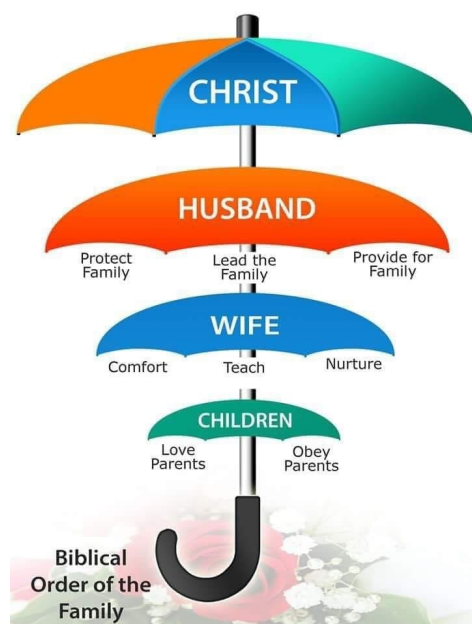
*Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.'* (Phil 2:4)

*'For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.'* (Gal 5:13)

- **PAUL DIRECTS US TO OUR OWN HEARTS** – as we consider these verses, it would be an incredible error for women to focus their attention upon *'husbands, love your wives'* or for men to focus their attention upon *'wives, submit to your husbands'*; we should each focus upon our own responsibilities before the Lord, not of those around us
- **THERE IS A BALANCE BETWEEN 'MUTUAL SUBMISSION' WITH 'POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY'** – the fact we are to serve one another does not negate the social ordering of society and the respect for those in authority (the God-given social structures of society)
- **EFFECTS ALL AREAS OF LIFE** – family, church, politics, work

**WIVES ARE TO SUBMIT TO THEIR HUSBANDS** — The word for 'submit' is used twice in these verses, once in v. 22 and once in v. 24 (some versions use the word twice but the second time is implied). Both of these verbs are from the root ὑποτάσσω [hupotassō] and means *'to take a subordinate role in relation to that of another.'*

This word was used of ordered relationships in a social structure ranging from slaves to masters, to citizens in a state, to the various ranks within the military, to the present context of wives to husbands. *At the heart of this submission is the notion of 'order'; God has established certain leadership and authority roles and submission is a humble recognition of that divine ordering. Paul's admonition to wives is therefore an appeal to free and responsible persons which can only be heeded voluntarily, never by the elimination or breaking of the human will, much less by means of a servile submissiveness. The verb Paul uses is 'reflective' indicating a voluntary submission (the passive would suggest a forced submission, a thought foreign to this context; there is no indication that the churches' submission to Christ is forced).*



*"The idea of subordination to authority in general, as well as in the family, is out of favour in a world which prizes permissiveness and freedom. Christians are often affected by these attitudes. Subordination smacks of exploitation and oppression that are deeply resented. But authority is not synonymous with tyranny, and the submission to which the apostle refers does not imply inferiority. Wives and husbands (as well as children and parents, servants and masters) have different God appointed roles, but all have equal dignity because they have been made in the divine image and in Christ have put on the new person who is created to be like God (4:24). Having described the single new humanity which God is creating in his Son, with its focus on the oneness in Christ of all, especially Jew and Gentile (cf. Col. 3:11; Gal. 3:28), the*

*apostle ‘does not now [in this household table] destroy his own thesis by erecting new barriers of sex, age and rank in God’s new society in which they have been abolished’. That the verb ‘submit, be subordinate’ can be used of Christ’s submission to the authority of the Father (1 Cor. 15:28) shows that it can denote a functional subordination without implying inferiority, or less honour and glory.*” [O’Brien, 411f] Paul uses forms of our word ‘hupotassō’ three times in 1 Cor 15:28 (Young’s Literal Translation): ‘*and when the all things may be subjected to him, then the Son also himself shall be subject to Him, who did subject to him the all things, that God may be the all in all.*’ (1 Cor 15:28 YLT)

***“It literally means ‘to rank under.’ Anyone who has served in the armed forces knows that ‘rank’ has to do with order and authority, not with value or ability. A colonel is higher in rank than a private, but that does not necessarily mean that the colonel is a better man than the private. It only means that the colonel has a higher rank and, therefore, more authority. ‘Let all things be done decently and in order’ (1 Cor 14:40) is a principle God follows in His creation. **Just as an army would be in confusion if there were no levels of authority, so society would be in chaos without submission.** Children should submit to their parents because God has given parents the authority to train their children and discipline them in love. Employees should submit to employers and obey them (Eph 6:5-8, where the immediate reference is to household slaves, but the application can be made to workers today). Citizens should submit to government authorities, even if the authorities are not Christians (Rom 13; 1 Peter 2:13-20). Submission is not subjugation. Submission is recognizing God’s order in the home and the church and joyfully obeying it. When a Christian wife joyfully submits to the Lord and to her own husband, it should bring out the best in her. (For this to happen, the husband must love his wife and use God’s order as a tool to build with, not a weapon to fight with, Eph 5:18-33.) Submission is the key to spiritual growth and ministry: Husbands should be submitted to the Lord, Christians should submit to each other (Eph 5:21), and wives should be submitted to the Lord and to their husbands.”***

[Wiersbe, *Be Faithful: NT Commentary 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (David C Cook; Colorado Springs CO) 1981, second edition 2009; p40]

**HUSBANDS ARE TO LOVE THEIR WIVES** — This is a present imperative (continual action command), ‘*love your wives*’ (5:25a) which controls the entire next section. It is followed by the example of Christ’s self-sacrificial love (5:25b-27). It is significant that following on the admonition of the wives to submit, it is not his ‘*rights*’ which are stressed but his obligations (in contrast with the contemporary culture). The admonition to husbands is not to ‘*instruct, advise, control and rule*’ but to ‘*love*’ their wives (v 25). The importance of Paul’s exhortation is shown by his repeating the command two more times, vv. 28 & 33.

***The husband’s attitude is therefore not to be one of self assertion or of ordering his wife about but of self-giving sacrifice (the same love as is demanded of all believers towards one another, 1 John 3:16). It is a love demanding he deny himself of time, resources, and self gratification to express his love for his wife. It is love irrespective of merit, even to the undeserving. It is a love that seeks the highest good in the one loved. It involves a readiness to surrender their lives if necessary for their wives; but while the willingness of the husband to give up his life for his wife is implied, it is often more difficult to continue daily to love in the little ways when there is irritation (or imagined irritation). It is a love regardless of his wife’s behavior, health condition, appearance, or any other potential deterrent; as Christ loved His people while enemies in an unlovely and unbecoming state, defines the love commitment that Christ expects from a Christian husband.***

*“The husband’s duty to the wife is enforced by another parallel – it ought to correspond to Christ’s love for the Church. This parallel restores the balance; if it should seem hard for the wife to be in subjection, the spirit of love, Christ-like love, on the part of the husband makes the duty easy. Christ did not merely pity the Church, or merely desire her good, but loved her; her image was stamped on his heart and her name graven on his hands; he desired to have her for his companion, longing for a return of her affection, for the establishment of sympathy between her and him. And he gave himself for her, showing that her happiness and welfare were dearer to him than his own – the true test of deep, real love.”* [The Pulpit Commentary]

**EACH OF OUR CHURCHES (ASSEMBLIES, CONGREGATIONS) ARE TO BE SMALL PICTURES OF THE FUTURE ETERNAL GATHERING OF ALL THOSE GIVEN TO CHRIST BY THE FATHER** — To illustrate the responsibilities of the husbands to their wives, Paul used the example of Christ’s relationship to His churches. This speaks in part of what B. H. Carroll calls ‘*the church in glory*’, the word ‘*ekklesia*’ still retaining its original emphasis of a local gathering. What is (or should be) true of each of our churches here on earth, will one day be true of the future gathering of all of God’s elect. On earth believers are to gather themselves together in assemblies, brothers and sisters in Christ loving and serving each other as a expression of their love for their Savior. Each of our assemblies should be a picture of individuals, each different from one another, yet living in harmony, unity and love. This is thus a microcosm of what one day will be, when all believers from all time will gather and sing a new song: ‘*You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.*’ (Rev 5:9)

*“The most striking part of this present section, however, is how Paul establishes the Christ-church relationship as a pattern for how husbands and wives should relate to one another in marriage. In fact, Paul’s christological teaching here almost overwhelms the fact that he is giving instructions to two members of the Christian household on how to properly relate to one another. Just before the conclusion of the discourse, Paul says, ‘This mystery is great, but I am speaking about Christ and the church’ (Eph 5:32).”* [Arnold, 364]