

Ephesians 5:21-31

August 29, 2021

How do you like family pictures? Don't they look like the perfect family? They look so perfect, don't they? Everyone looks attractive, so perfectly matched, all smiling, wearing stylish clothing, sitting there so perfectly, etc. Don't they look like the perfect family? But let's be honest. Real families, don't like that all the time do they? The kids have food all over their face. The grandkids are screaming because they need a nap so bad. Moms and Dads are just glad to get the kids out of the door in the morning, into the car, dropped off at school, and rush off to get to work because they are now behind schedule. Or how about those nights, when no one got any sleep? You're tired, you're not feeling well, but you need to put a smile on your face for everyone else around you. When you look at the Facebook page of your friends and you see pictures from another perfect vacation, you begin to wonder why didn't your vacation look like that? You look at other kids around and begin to wonder, why can't my child do all of that? What does the perfect family look like? What does the perfect husband and wife look like?

If you have ever had any of those questions go through your mind, then the Apostle Paul has the answer for you in our text this morning. The answer lies in these opening words of the Apostle Paul: **"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."** You might look at those words and think: *Who could possibly do that all the time? No one could do that.* You would be correct – No one can do that without Christ. Yet, isn't that the whole purpose of the Book of Ephesians. Nothing is possible if we are not **"in Christ."** Paul has used that phrase throughout the book of Ephesians. It is only in Christ, that we are *adopted, focused; it is in Christ that we have someone to model, to imitate, to follow. It is in Christ that we are loved.*

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." To better understand those words in our text, we need to ask the question: *Who are these words for?* The answer is found in the words that we looked at last week where Paul writes: **"be filled with the Spirit."** The Apostle Paul is making the assumption that when he writes verse 21 in our text, he is speaking to people who are **"filled with the Spirit."** So, when Paul is talking here about marriage, or when he is talking about parenting or about how we are to work, which follows our text, he is talking to people who are **"filled with the Spirit."** Why is that important? Unless we have faith in Jesus, these words here don't make any sense. Without the Holy Spirit living in us, we don't have the power to do what he says in these verses about marriage. When Paul writes that first verse in our text, **"submit to one another out of reverence for Christ,"** he is speaking to both men and women.

It is important that verse 22 follows verse 21. What do I mean? Look at these verses again. ²¹ **Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.** ²² **Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.** ²³ **For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.** ²⁴ **Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.** ²⁵ **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.** Both husbands and wives are to submit to each other, just in different ways.

Scripture that make it very clear that *"submission"* has nothing to do with value or importance. To God, there's no hierarchy of value for race, social status, or gender. All are equally valuable and important, because all are one in Christ. This is Paul's thinking in these words. Every believer submits or places themselves under Christ when they are filled with the Spirit. When they are filled with the Spirit, then they place themselves under each other. How do we do that?

²²**Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.** ²⁵ **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.** The comparison that Paul is using here is simple. As believers in Christ, we place ourselves under him. Why? Because we know what Christ has done for us. When you see the love that Jesus that Jesus showed this world as he gave his life on the cross, you can't help but to love one another as Christ loved us. What that means in marriage is that both husband and wife are placing each other's best interest ahead of their interest.

This is hard to do. Why? Because Satan is always there trying to get ourselves to be very selfish people. It all began back in the Garden of Eden. He convinced Adam and Eve to think of themselves first. He convinced them to think that if they would eat from that tree that God had commanded them not to eat from, they would be just as good or even better than God. They put their interest ahead of God's interest in them. Every day, Satan convinces us to put our interests

ahead of the interests of others and even the interests of God. This scene plays out again and again in marriages every single day.

That's not the way that God designed marriage. This whole concept of submitting to one another out of reverence in Christ, is so foreign to our thinking. In many aspects of life, we live in a consumer relationship with others. I have a consumer relationship with my cell phone provider. I have a consumer relationship with my internet provider. I have a consumer relationship with the grocery stores that I shop. You do too. If I find a better product at a better price, I'll change that relationship. That's okay. But that's not the way that God designed marriage. He designed each person in a marriage to play the "Jesus role." He designed marriage for each person to put the interest of the other ahead of theirs. He designed marriage for each person to sacrifice things for each other. He designed marriage for each person to love the other.

The only way that this marriage thing works is when Christ is there with us. You see, there is no perfect marriage. There was only one. That was when God created Adam and Eve to have a perfect relationship with him and with each other. That didn't last real long either. Yet, even though that sin had entered their relationship with God and each other, God still loved them. He loved them so much that he would send his Son to give his life for them. That's how much Jesus loves each of us. That's how much God loved husbands and wives in marriages. He walks with us. He forgives us when we fall down and stumble. His love is always there helping each of us to **"submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."** For it is in Christ, we have the perfect picture of love. For it is in Christ that we are part of God perfect family made possible only through the blood of Jesus. Amen.