

## “What Submitting Really Means” - Ephesians 5:21-24 – July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018

- The title of today's teaching is “What Submitting Really Means.”
  - I'm only taking four verses today for a couple of reasons, chief of which is the following verses concerning husbands are longer.
  - As such, they will require a significantly greater amount of time to cover, and this for what should be deemed obvious reasons.
- I'm hoping the Holy Spirit will enable us to clear up what's arguably one of the most controversial and misunderstood passages. Actually, it's for this reason that I sensed the Lord would have me to begin with verse twenty-one in the context of the passage. This because many of the best ancient Greek manuscripts do not have the word “submit” in verse twenty-two concerning wives.
- One commentator explained it best this way, “Ephesians 5:22 ...simply reads wives, to your own husbands. The topic is submission and Paul focused on a particularly important realm of submission—the Christian marriage, from the wife unto the husband. ...It is as if Paul said this: ‘I commanded you to submit to one another in a very general way. Now, if you do it in a general way, how much more so should wives do it to their own husbands in this special relationship of marriage.’”
- In order to better understand what the Apostle Paul is saying, it's of paramount importance to know what submit literally means.
  - Namely, that of being under in rank in the sense of the military having different ranks as generals' colonels majors captains etc.
  - While someone may have a higher rank than another, it in no way means that they are superior to the one with the lower rank.
- I like how Warren Wiersbe said it, “Anyone who has served in the armed forces knows that ‘rank’ has to do with order and authority, not with value or ability. ...Just as an army would be in confusion if there were no levels of authority, so society would be in chaos without submission.”
- It's with this understanding that our text concerning wives begins to make sense such that, it speaks to this authority structure.
  - The ordained authority structure is Christ is the covering head of the husband and the husband is the covering head of the wife.
  - I use covering in the context of the awesome responsibility that comes packaged with being placed in the position of authority.
- The problem is many a husband has bought into a misinterpretation of this text under the banner of being the final authority.
  - Also, many a wife has bought into another misinterpretation of this text under the banner of, “I will only submit when I agree.”
  - Neither is correct because both think they are right and worse yet, they think they are the one to decide what the Lord wants.
- Let me hasten to say that this in no way means that the wife should ever submit to her husband if it's unbiblical or even illegal.
  - Nor should the husband ever force his wife to do anything that is unbiblical, illegal, or immoral, as he's under God's authority.
  - Certainly, that's not what the Apostle Paul is saying when he writes that wives are to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord.
- If that's what unto the Lord does not mean then what does it mean? D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones answers that, this way, “It means: ‘Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands because it's a part of your duty to the Lord, because it's an expression of your submission to the Lord.’ Or, ‘Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands; do it in this way, do it as a part of your submission to the Lord.’ In other words, you're not doing it only for the husband, you're doing it primarily for the Lord Himself ... You're doing it for Christ's sake, you're doing it because you know that He exhorts you to do it, because it is well-pleasing in His sight that you should be doing it. It's part of your Christian behavior; it's a part of your discipleship. ...There can be no more compelling motive for any action than this; and every Christian wife who is concerned above everything else to please the Lord Jesus Christ, will find no difficulty in this; indeed it will be her greatest delight to do what the Apostle tells us here.”
- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the main reasons couples have this conflict in their marriage, this would be it.
  - Specifically, that of the husband abdicating his responsibility as the spiritual leader, and the wife trying to usurp his authority.
  - This dynamic goes all the way back to the garden with Adam and Eve, when the curse of sin entered the world in Genesis 3.
- Genesis 3:16 - To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.”
- At first read you almost get the impression the woman's desire will be for her husband, but it's she'll desire to rule her husband.
  - Perhaps better said, the curse causing the conflict in marriage will be centered on the husband's ruling authority over the wife.
  - In other words the wife will desire to usurp the authority of the man just as Satan desired to usurp the authority of almighty God.
- Enter the Spirit filled life and the Spirit filled wife, who is then able to do that which she cannot otherwise do, which is to submit.
  - This is why the Apostle Paul emphasizes the need to be filled with the Holy Spirit in the verses prior to this and even after this.
  - I suppose you could say the “how” of the Holy Spirit that enables us to do the “what” of submitting to God's authority structure.
- You'll forgive the simplicity with which I say this, but I would suggest that this truth could solve most marriage problems today.
  - The reason being is when God's ordained structure of authority is submitted to in a marriage, there is a harmony that ensues.
  - Conversely, absent this submission, instead of harmony that ensues, the marriage will be riddled with both conflict and chaos.