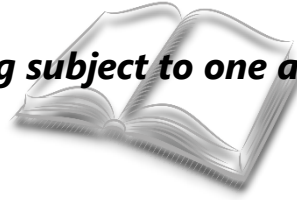


# The One Anothers *being subject to one another* Ephesians 5:21



## **A Reminder** from John 13 (NASB)

**<sup>14</sup> If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. <sup>16</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.**

**<sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

In order to comprehend Paul's instruction to believers in the Ephesian church, it is important to understand both the context and key concepts for this study.

- Paul's **purpose for writing** this Epistle: "to explain the spiritual position and privileges of believers achieved for them by sovereign grace, while reminding the Ephesians of the daily conduct that must come as a result of their status" <sup>BK</sup>
  - The verse that expresses Paul's purpose: ***Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,*** Ephesians 4:1
  - a possible **outline** <sup>BK</sup>
    - Doctrine: The Christian's Position (1-3)
    - Duties: The Christian's Practice (4-6)
      - the Spirit-filled life (5:15-21)
- Paul describes the concept of the Spirit-filled life **from a corporate perspective**. It is important to remember that many of Paul's epistles are addressed to the church as a collective. Thus, his letter to the Ephesians is filled with words written in the **plural**, including the **imperatives/commands** he issues to the church. Grammatically, most often when an imperative is given, the subject is typically not mentioned ie. "**you all be filled with the Spirit**"
  - "**be filled with the Spirit**":

- the Holy Spirit's **control of the total life** of the Christian. The Holy Spirit's filling **can be repeated** and needs to be frequently. This distinguishes "filling" from the baptism of the Holy Spirit which only occurs at the time the sinner is regenerated. <sup>BD</sup>
- This is not so much a matter of our getting more of the Holy Spirit; presumably all of us possess the Holy Spirit in His entirety. It is, rather, **a matter of His possessing more of our lives**. Each of us is to aspire to giving the Holy Spirit full control of our lives. When that happens, **our lives will manifest** whatever **gifts** God intends for us to have, along with all the **fruit** and **acts of His empowering** that He wishes to display through us. <sup>ME</sup>
- Be filled with the Holy Spirit refers predominantly to exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit in a life that is under the lordship of the Spirit <sup>SF</sup>
- **use of the passive** voice in imperative verbs and participles
  - **"Voice"** indicates **how the subject is related to the action or state** expressed by the verb. If the subject is doing the action, the active voice is being used. When the **subject is receiving the action**, the passive voice is being used. The 3 verbs and participle below are in the passive voice, with the subject being the believers (plural) in Ephesus. <sup>DW</sup>
- the **causative/permissive passive**
  - implies **consent, permission, or cause of the action of the verb on the part of the subject**. This type of passive, although rare, occurs with imperatives because **volition of the subject is necessary to bring about a condition of obedience**. <sup>DW</sup> Both imperatives in verse 18 are causative passives. Others are found in Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 6:7; 1 Peter 5:6, etc....

## I. Defining Subjection Biblically

...and **be subject** to one another in the fear of Christ. Ephesians 5:21 (NASB)

- **being subject** (ὑποτασσόμενοι) **present passive participle** plural nominative masculine
  - from ὑπο-τάσσω
    - a military term, literally meaning to place in or to rank under, indicating a proper social order
    - to subject (active), or **to put into subjection** (passive) <sup>A-S</sup>
  - the term implies not rebelling against a previously established order, but recognizing subordination

- **subjection within human relationships and institutions**

- Luke 2:51
  - Jesus is subject (passive) to His parents
- Romans 13:1
  - **Every person is to be in subjection** (passive) **to the governing authorities.** For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.
- Romans 13:5
  - Therefore **it is necessary to be in subjection**, (middle) not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.
- 1 Corinthians 14:34
  - **The women** are to keep silent **in the churches**; for they are not permitted to speak, but **are to subject** (passive) **themselves**, just as the Law also says.
- 1 Corinthians 16:16
  - ...that **you also be in subjection** (passive) **to such men** (Timothy & Apollos vv. 10, 12) **and to everyone who helps in the work and labors.**
- Ephesians 5:24
  - But as the church is subject (passive) to Christ, **so also the wives [ought to be] to their husbands in everything.**
- Colossians 3:18
  - **Wives, be subject** (passive) **to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.**
- Titus 2:5
  - [young women are] **to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject** (passive) **to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.**
- Titus 2:9
  - **Urge bondslaves to be subject** (passive) **to their own masters** in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative,
- Titus 3:1
  - **Remind them** [believers] **to be subject** (passive) **to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed,**
- Hebrews 12:9 implied
  - **Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them;** shall we not much rather **be subject (passive) to the Father of spirits, and live?**
- 1 Peter 2:13
  - **Submit** (passive) **yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,**
- 1 Peter 2:18
  - **Servants, be submissive** (passive) **to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.**

- 1 Peter 3:1
  - In the same way, you **wives, be submissive** (passive) **to your own husbands** so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,
- 1 Peter 3:5
  - For in this way in former times the **holy women** also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive (passive) **to their own husbands;**
- 1 Peter 5:5
  - You **younger men, likewise, be subject** (passive) **to your elders;** and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.
- Hebrews 13:17 submit (ὑπαίκετε) present active imperative 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural
  - Obey your leaders and **submit to them**, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.
    - literally – to withdraw, give way to'
    - figuratively – to yield to someone's authority, yield, give way
    - this term seems narrower whereas the term to subject provides a word picture of one falling in line with all the rest so that the church remains uniform, unified
- **aspects of creation in passive subjection to God's active subjection or implied will**
  - Luke 10:17
    - the demons are subject (passive) to Jesus' disciples in His name
    - Luke 10:20 however take note:
      - "Nevertheless **do not rejoice in this**, that the spirits are subject (passive) to you, **but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.**"
  - Romans 8:7
    - **the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject** (passive) **itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,**
  - Romans 8:20
    - **For the creation was subjected** (passive) **to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected** (active) **it, in hope**
  - Romans 10:3
    - **For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject** (passive) **themselves to the righteousness of God.**
    - them = Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh or national Israel 9:3
  - 1 Corinthians 15:27

- **For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION** (active) **UNDER HIS FEET.** But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," (passive) it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection (active) to Him.
- 1 Corinthians 15:28
  - **When all things are subjected** (passive) **to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected** (passive) **to the One who subjected** (active) **all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.**
- Ephesians 1:22
  - **And He put all things in subjection** (active) **under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,**
- Ephesians 5:24
  - **But as the church is subject** (passive) **to Christ,** so also the wives [ought to be] to their husbands in everything.
- Philippians 3:21
  - **...who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject** (passive) **all things to Himself.**
- Hebrews 2:5
  - For **He did not subject** (passive) **to angels the world to come,** concerning which we are speaking.
- Hebrews 2:8
  - **YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION** (active) **UNDER HIS FEET."** For in **subjecting** (active) **all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him.** But now we do not yet see **all things subjected** (passive) **to him.**
- Hebrews 12:9
  - Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; **shall we not much rather be subject** (passive) **to the Father of spirits,** and live?
- James 4:7
  - **Submit** (passive) **therefore to God.** Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
- 1 Peter 2:13
  - **Submit** (passive) **yourselves for the Lord's sake** to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,
- 1 Peter 3:22
  - **who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected** (passive) **to Him.**

## II. Making Observations of the Text

<sup>15</sup> Therefore **be** careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, <sup>16</sup> **making the most of** your time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> So then **do not be** foolish, but **understand** what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup> And **do not get drunk** with wine, for that is dissipation, but **be filled** with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> **speaking** to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** and **making melody** with your heart to the Lord; <sup>20</sup> always **giving thanks** for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; <sup>21</sup> and **be subject** to one another in the fear of Christ. Ephesians 5:15–21(NASB)

- **5 imperatives** (in **red**)
  - imperative: a positive or negative command which requires one’s obedience
- **6 adverbial participles** (in **purple**)
  - adverbs further clarify/describe the verbal action, ie. what it looks like or how it is accomplished
  - the participle in v. 16 modifies the verb “you walk” in v. 15
  - the participles in vv. 19–21 modify the main imperative in v. 18 – be filled
- **passive** voice
  - Voice indicates how the subject is related to the action or state expressed by the verb. If the subject is doing the action, the active voice is being used. When the subject is receiving the action, the passive voice is being used. The 3 verbs and participle below are in the passive voice, with the subject being the believers (plural) in Ephesus. <sup>DW</sup>
    - **do not be** foolish
    - **do not get drunk** with wine
    - **be filled** with the Spirit
    - **be subject** to one another

### III. Verse by Verse

- v. 15
  - **be** = consider (Βλέπετε) present active **imperative** 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural
    - literally means to see, to look to
    - figuratively means to process information by giving thought, direct one’s attention to something, to note, to heed
  - **carefully** (ἀκριβῶς) adverb describing manner in which one obeys the imperative
    - strict conformity to a standard or norm, with focus on careful attention, accurately, to do so well
  - **you [all] walk** (περιπατεῖτε) present indicative 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural
    - literally means to walk
    - metaphorically means the way one lives the Christian life, conduct
    - Paul emphasizes the “walk” in 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15
  - not as **unwise** (ἄσοφοι)
    - of one who lacks the power of proper discernment, foolish

- but as **wise** (σοφοί)
  - understanding that results in wise attitudes and conduct
  - wise in that the wisdom is divine in nature and origin
    - endowed with practical wisdom
    - true wisdom into known facts – divine in nature & wisdom

What characterizes the wise person? How is wisdom manifested in the lives of believers?

James 3:13 says, "Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom." Romans 16:19 says, "For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil."

1 Corinthians makes a clear distinction between worldly wisdom and godly wisdom. 1 Corinthians 3:18-19 says, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, "He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS." And Jeremiah 9:23-24 states, "Thus says the Lord, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the Lord."

- v. 16
  - **making the most of** (ἐξαγοραζόμενοι) present middle participle plural nominative masculine
    - to redeem, to buy up for oneself intensively
      - gaining something, especially of advantage or opportunity
      - snapping up opportunities when they occur
      - taking full advantage, making good use of
    - middle voice – emphasizes participation of subject for personal benefit
      - Colossians 4:5
        - Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, **making the most of** the opportunity.
        - context relates to opportunity for evangelism

In verse 16, Paul is appropriately expressing a choice that needs to be made in perilous times. He instructs the Ephesians that to make the most of the time is to take advantage of any opportunity that comes your way to walk as one ought while avoiding anything that interferes with understanding the Lord's commanded will.

- v. 17
  - φρενός refers to the process of careful consideration, thinking, understanding
  - **foolish** (ἄφρονες) is the opposite of φρενός
    - the word describes someone *lacking* prudence, good judgment, sensibility, ignorant, or reason. The person is senseless, in want of mental sanity and

sobriety, reckless and inconsiderate in habit of mind, and therefore unable to apply knowledge practically. <sup>A-S; BDAG</sup>

- **Do not become** (γίνεσθε) **present middle imperative** 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural
  - The middle voice is used to describe the subject performing or experiencing the action expressed by the verb in such a way that emphasizes the subject's participation. <sup>DW</sup>
  - do not begin to become foolish and continue in foolishness
- but **understand** (συνίετε) from συνίημι/συνίω meaning
  - 1. literally to bring together or set together
  - 2. metaphorically to perceive, to understand
    - to grasp facts or knowledge with results
- v. 18
  - 2 present **middle/passive** imperatives
    - to disobey the commands is sin
    - conditioned on obedience
  - **do not get drunk** with wine (μεθύσκεσθε) **present passive imperative** 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural
    - from μεθύσκω meaning to cause to become intoxicated
      - other passive uses – Luke 12:45, 1 Thessalonians 5:7
      - Paul is referring to the act of someone giving themselves over to being controlled by the substance of strong drink. While it is a conscious decision to give oneself over to alcohol, it is the substance that then controls the person; causing various kinds of impairments. The person is then on the receiving end of the action of being given over to the effects of alcohol.
        - the drunk in his thinking and actions
          - is un-submissive, reckless
          - asserts himself
          - lacks self-control, prudence
          - is boastful, praises self, thinks he is wonderful
          - underestimates or overestimates
  - **be filled** (πληροῦσθε) **present passive imperative** 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural
    - from πληρόω meaning to make full, fill (full)
    - here used with the sense of persons *being filled* continually with the quality of being more under the control of the Spirit
      - passive implies the subjects cannot fill themselves
      - yet requiring obedience, giving oneself over to being filled
  - **with the Spirit**
    - **both getting drunk with wine and being filled with the Holy Spirit cause a person to think and act in ways that are normally unnatural to him** <sup>CR</sup>



- one must be careful **not** to view “*being filled with the Spirit*” as referring to **the content with which believers are filled.** <sup>DW</sup>
- v. 19
  - 3 present active participles
  - **speaking to one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
    - outward expression of an inner reality toward other believers
  - **singing and making melody with your heart**
    - inwardly
  - **to the Lord;**
    - upward, unto the Lord
- v. 20
  - a 4<sup>th</sup> present active participle
  - **always giving thanks for all things**
    - continuous and pervasive – in all areas of life
  - in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;
- v. 21
  - a present passive participle
  - relationally
  - **being subject** (ὑποτασσόμενοι) **present passive participle** plural nominative masculine
    - from ὑπο-τάσσω signifying order or arrangement under
      - as in ordering oneself under a leader
    - literally used as a military term, to place in or to rank under, indicating a proper social order
    - meaning to subject (active), or **to put into subjection** (passive) <sup>A-5</sup>
    - the term implies not rebelling, but recognizing subordination
  - **How is “being subject” to be understood?**
    - 2 views
      - 1. mutually – A to B, B to A in love and with humility = NO
        - attitude of submission – deferring to one another
        - parents to children, children to parents? NO
      - 2. submission in the appropriate spheres <sup>MH</sup>
        - being willing to submit to those who have authority, whether it be in the home, church, or in society <sup>HH</sup>
        - v. 21 “being subject to one another” then provides evidence of believers in the local church being filled by the Spirit, while at the same time introducing the principle necessary for practicing 6:1–9
  - **in the fear of the Lord**
    - **fear** (φόβω) reverence, respect toward God <sup>BDAG</sup>
    - Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10
      - connects back to 5:15 & 17 wise vs. foolish

- Deuteronomy 4:6 **So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding** in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'
- unity in view
  - Ephesians 4:1–6 being diligent to preserve unity,... one body, one Spirit,... one Lord...
  - the person who subjects himself is no longer individual, signing away his own rights, no longer governs or controls himself, rather does as is told, to stray makes him guilty of insubordination, the moment one thinks individualistically (selfishly) he is wrong <sup>MLJ</sup>
    - ie. follows the commanded will of God, submitting/subjecting his will to God's will
- humility is prerequisite

#### IV. Applying Ephesians 5:21

##### How are believers to be subject to one another in the fear of Christ?

- Paul's letter to the Corinthians offers a helpful example of subjection within the context of the church.
  - 1 Corinthians 14:26–33 What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. **Let all things be done for edification.** 27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; 28 but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. 30 But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; 32 and **the spirits of prophets are subject (passive) to prophets;** 33 **for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.**
    - chapters 12–14 pertain to prescribing proper and orderly worship
    - notice in verse 32, Paul uses a present passive indicative verb. The indicative is significant. The indicative mood is used when a fact is being asserted. Robert L. Thomas writes, "**The indicative mood of the verb sets for the condition as it actually was, not as it ought to be. It is a matter of fact that such a condition prevails with one who genuinely exercised the gift of prophecy. For it to have been otherwise would make God the author of confusion, not of peace, and contrary to verse 33a.**"

- the Spirit of God is over the use of the gifts, and as such, the subjection being described here is a subjection brought about by God within the church for the further building up of the church. It is clear evidence of God's work in the life of the local church and among believers as is seen by the explanatory clause that follows in verse 33. The result is not confusion but peace, unity of the body.
- **Why are believers to be subject to one another in the fear of the Lord?**
  - v. 15 to walk wisely, giving careful consideration to one's daily walk
  - v. 17 this is the will of the Lord
    - not grieving the Spirit of God Ephesians 4:30
    - not quenching the Holy Spirit 1 Thessalonians 5:19
      - present imperative – the Thessalonians are commanded to stop doing what they were doing, namely despising manifestations of the Spirit
    - not being controlled by other things Ephesians 5:18
- subjection/submission/respect/honor vs. insubordination/disrespect/dishonor
  - wives to husbands
    - Proverbs 12:4; 19:13; 21:9, 19; 25:24; 1 Corinthians 11:3, 8–9; Ephesians 5:22–24, 33; Colossians 3:18; 1 Timothy 2:11–14; 1 Peter 3:1–6
  - children to parents
    - Exodus 20:12; 21:15; Deuteronomy 21:18–21; 27:16; 1 Samuel 15:23; Psalm 19:14; Proverbs 1:7, 8–9; 3:11–12, 35; 6:20–23; 10:1; 12:1, 15; 13:1; 14:13; 15:5, 12, 15, 31–32; 16:20; 19:26; 20:20; 22:15; 26:11–12; 29:1; 30:17; Ephesians 6:1–3; Colossians 3:20; Hebrews 12:5–11
  - believers to church leaders
    - Exodus 22:28; Acts 23:4–5; 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 7, 17
  - citizens to government
    - Romans 13:1–7; Titus 3:1–2; 1 Peter 2:13–17
  - slaves & masters
    - Ephesians 6:5–9; Colossians 3:22; 1 Peter 2:18

**“God has so bound us to each other, that no man ought to avoid subjection. And where love reigns, there is mutual servitude. I do not except even kings and governors, for they rule that they may serve. Therefore it is very right that he should exhort all to be subject to each other.”** John Calvin

## V. Further Study

**Memorize:** Ephesians 5:18–21; Colossians 3:15–17

**Pray:** Confess to God times of not being under the Holy Spirit's control as commanded; acknowledge that the work of the Holy Spirit is a wonderful provision in your life and the life of the local church; thank God for the times you've already realized being filled by the Holy Spirit as evidenced in your speech, personal praise, gratefulness, and subjection to others. Ask that God would continually make these more apparent in your life in order to be filled by His Spirit.

**Sing:** "Holy Spirit, Living Breath of God" (*Hymns of Grace* #318)

**Discuss:**

1. In your own words, define what is meant by "be filled with the Holy Spirit" and relate how "being subject to one another in the fear of Christ" is evidence of His filling.
2. How many areas in your life can you think of that demand your being subject to others?
3. Why is the fear of Christ essential in this?
4. What attitudes of the heart interfere with living this out in the life of the church?
5. How does humility factor into obeying Ephesians 5:18 & 21? Try to be exhaustive here.
6. What blessings arise out of obedience to these verses?
7. What are the results in the church when disobedience is present?

next class:      Sunday April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
                         Sunday May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**TMAI Report by Sean Ransom**  
**Be Kind to One Another** (Ephesians 4:32)

## VI. Citations & Resources

ME – Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (GraceLife Library)

SF – Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (GraceLife Library)

HH – Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (highly recommended for studying Ephesians)

MH – Pastor Mike Hovland, "The Careful Christian"  
<https://gracelife.ca/mediaPlayer.php?id=2149&x=1682107156682>

MLJ – D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home & Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18-6:9* <https://www.mljtrust.org/sermons/book-of-ephesians/5/> (recommended sermon)

BK – Brad Klassen, "Ordination Preparation" course notes (The Master's Seminary)

CR – Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*

DW – Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*

BD – *Biblical Doctrine* eds. John MacArthur & Richard Mayhue (GraceLife Library)

A-S George Abbott-Smith, *Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*

BDAG – Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*

