

Ephesians 5:21-27

5:21 *Place yourselves under each other's authority out of respect for Christ.*

The preceding verses encouraged the children of light to be filled with the Holy Spirit rather than being controlled by a craving for wine. Believers are to walk with Christ, taking advantage of every opportunity the Spirit brings them rather than passing through life foolishly. This same godly wisdom is also the fundamental cause for reshaping the framework and substance of our thinking and reasoning. Believers think and act on the basis of what Christ's truth instructs whether or not the rationale contradicts our natural ways.

Christian relationships are then characterized by the godly attitude of love and service as seen in Jesus' relationship with His Father. Jesus loved His Father so much that He obeyed Him even though it led Him to a cruel death on the cross. Like Jesus, believer's place themselves under each other's authority for the sake of Christ. God's children relate to one another in an attitude of humbleness and respect as a living, dynamic witness of the person and character of Jesus Christ within them. Believers view each other with a submissive outlook, recognizing the power and authority of God at work in all of His children.

5:22 *Wives, place yourselves under your husbands' authority as you have placed yourselves under the Lord's authority.*

Unlike the cultural practices of many social groups, in Christ the relationship between a married couple is characterized by mutual respect and love. Wives are instructed to place themselves under the authority of their husbands. This does not mean that the husband is superior to the wife. Nonetheless, wives should submit to their husbands as the natural outcome of their submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. The wife's submission to the Lord produces a continued attitude of respect for her husband. The direct, personal relationship

of the wife with Jesus Christ directly impacts her relationship with her husband.

5:23 *The husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. It is his body, and he is its Savior.*

As the sovereign Creator Who planned all things according to His pleasure, God designed a definite structure of authority for His creation. Just as Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, so is the husband is the head of his wife. In the same way, wives are instructed to submit to their husbands in obedience to God's created order. Jesus Christ offered Himself as the sacrifice for the salvation of the redeemed, which became the Church—the Body of Christ. Jesus Christ is, therefore, both the Savior and the head of the Church. Likewise, God instituted the marriage structure in which the husband is the head of the wife. God first created the man, and then created woman from man's rib. In simple, plain language Paul defined the husband's position of authority within the family structure. He calls upon the husband to recognize it, instructs the wife to respect it, and instructs both to live within the boundaries of His created order.

5:24 *As the church is under Christ's authority, so wives are under their husbands' authority in everything.*

God's created order affirms the headship of Christ over the Church and that of the husband over his wife. The same created order also institutes the position of the Church under the headship of Christ and that of the wife under the husband. The wife must recognize God's created order and submit herself to the authority of her husband just as the Church submits to the authority of Jesus Christ its Savior. God's created order clearly identifies the authority under which the Church and the family are structured.

5:25 *Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it.*

Whereas respect to her husband is required of the wife, the husband is instructed to love his wife just as Jesus Christ loved the Church—His Body. Christ's love for the Church is expressed through His selfless sacrifice of death on the Cross for the salvation of the redeemed. The husband's responsibility in the relationship is to love his wife selflessly and sacrificially. The husband should follow the example of Jesus Christ and love his wife, even to the point of dying for her.

5:26-27 *²⁶He did this to make the church holy by cleansing it, washing it using water along with spoken words. ²⁷Then he could present it to himself as a glorious church, without any kind of stain or wrinkle—holy and without faults.*

Jesus' love for the redeemed is expressed through the uncommon display of His divine care, unreserved obedience, unquestioned submission, perfect righteousness, definite purpose, ultimate selflessness, and certain victory. Jesus offered Himself on Calvary to remove the wages of sin and the sting of death from the redeemed who are called into His salvation by the grace of God's mercy. In doing this, Jesus cleansed the redeemed from all unrighteousness, making them fit to be His Body. Jesus Christ loved the redeemed so much that He bore the wrath of God's judgment and set them free from the just judgment they truly deserved. Jesus was not stained by sin, but took the place of the cursed and suffered the fury of the Law. The Father loved Him so much that He made Him the head of those whom He ransomed so that they could be with Him forever. The Church is a glorious reflection of the unmatched glory of its Redeemer.

Notes/Applications

The opening verses of this chapter instruct the believer to live as practical followers of Jesus Christ, to emulate Him and His love, and to reject sin and its manifestations. As practical followers of God, the redeemed are called to live as the children of light, effectively reflecting the person and the character of Jesus Christ in their demeanor as

well as their relationships with each other. One way of reflecting the person and the character of Jesus Christ is to recognize the authority of God and live with each other in active, submissive obedience to God's ways as displayed in His created order.

When God created the heavens and the earth, He implemented a structure by which all people are to live. This divine order was given by God for the benefit of mankind, establishing boundaries by which everyone is constrained. Even though God is the ultimate authority, believers should recognize that this authority is often expressed through the correction of fellow disciples. The structure of this relationship is most clearly seen in the marriage relationship. The relationship between husband and wife should always be viewed as a union based on mutual love and respect under the authority of the Lord.

The wife should respect her husband recognizing that God has determined that her husband should be her head. By respecting her husband, the wife recognizes God's will and honors His created order by her obedience, primarily in agreement with His design. Because of her submission to God, she holds her husband in higher regard than herself. She views him with a selfless attitude of respect as her expression of obedience to the Lord. Because her obedience to her husband is also her expression of love for her Redeemer, the wife who respects her husband also loves him with a selfless love.

Paul instructs husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. The husband should hold his wife in higher regard than himself, viewing her with a selfless and sacrificial love, strong and deep enough to make him willing and ready to die for her as Christ did for His Church. In loving his wife with such a sacrificial love, the husband recognizes God's will and purpose in her and honors Him by loving her with real, practical love.

When godly respect and love is exchanged within the marriage relationship, a truly indivisible union takes place. The relationship is held together by God and continues to develop by the precepts of His Word. Respect will naturally lead to love and love to respect as

the husband and wife express their care for each other cultivated in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. For a redeemed couple, placing one another under each other's authority is the natural outcome of placing oneself under the authority of God Who brought them together according to His perfect will and sovereign grace. In a manner of speaking, a marriage characterized by respect and love reflects a life of godly, conscious, and active obedience expected of all of God's redeemed children.