

**Sermon on Ephesians 5:21-31 for 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
August 25-27, 2018 – St. Paul’s Ev. Lutheran Church – Pastor Nate Scharf**

**Submit and Love out of reverence for Christ.**

We tend to want to fit in, but God wants us to stand apart. It may not always be popular, but it always accomplishes his purpose and is a blessing to us. Trust him and stand apart. Today Paul shows us how we stand apart for Christ in Ephesians chapter 5.

**Submit and Love out of reverence for Christ.**

*Ephesians 5:21-31- <sup>21</sup> Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. <sup>22</sup> Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—<sup>30</sup> for we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”<sup>e1</sup>*

Stand apart. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” “Submit” How should we understand that word? When one joins the military or enters the work force often we submit ourselves to those who are over us. We may think nothing of this. But the Christian submits not just in military matters or only if the money is good or absolutely necessary. You reflect Christ’s self-sacrificing love for you by putting the needs of others ahead of your own, by taking into consideration how best to serve your neighbor.

Listen to how Jesus describes it in Mark, chapter 10, “*Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* Jesus set the standard for our lives when he, true God in the flesh with power and authority, made it his goal not to Lord his power over us but to serve and to give himself up for us. Dear Christian, you stand apart – when you place yourself willingly under the needs of your neighbor.

Paul applies this to marriage, God’s gift to humankind. *<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

Wives, you serve your Lord best when you willingly submit yourselves to your own husbands. When you do this in a humble and trusting spirit, you stand apart. Notice this does

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<sup>1</sup> *The New International Version.* (2011). (Eph 5:21–31). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

not mean you are a door mat, nor an object, a possession or a defenseless target for abuse. You are a dearly loved child of God, a crown of God's creation, that suitable helper that God so carefully crafted, at whose sight the first man broke out in poetry. Wives serve the Lord when they see their husbands as their head – not task-masters, kings or dictators, nor above God and his clear Word, but as the head of the body is the final say and lead in what the body does and how it works, so the wife respects and upholds her husband in this way and helps him.

Your example is the church. *“As the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”* Wives, as you respect your husbands, speak well of them and help them in every way to be the heads and leaders that God has called them to be, you please God and stand apart in this world. Women, men and society will be shocked at your trust in God, your faith and how this relationship you have with your husband works. And God is pleased and will bless you. (If your husband is not a believer, read 1 Peter 3 for guidance/comfort).

<sup>25</sup> *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her* <sup>26</sup> *to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,* <sup>27</sup> *and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.* <sup>28</sup> *In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.* <sup>29</sup> *After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—*<sup>30</sup> *for we are members of his body.*

In a world of Homer Simpsons who bumble through life, and men who give up their responsibility for headship for the siren call of a fishing shack, a ball field or a bottle, or try to control and dominate, you, Christian husbands, are different and serve God well when you love your wives and follow Christ's model of giving yourself up for her for her benefit. Your model is what Christ did for the church – what she needed and what would benefit her for eternity, paying the ultimate cost.

Your example is your body. You take care of your own body – you protect it, feed it, are concerned about it. This is another example of how you can love your wife. Take care of them. See that they are protected, that their needs are met – physically, emotionally, and spiritually as you come to God's house to hear His Word and of his love, forgiveness, and will for you. You will shock the world, your buddies and even your own sinful nature as you cherish your wife, love her, and speak well of her, and sacrifice for her good. You stand apart. God is pleased and you will be blessed.

Wives, Husbands, Christians – do we need to repent? Wives, have you resented God's plan and failed to trust him because the man you follow is not Christ, nor has he much looked like Christ lately? Have you respected him, told him that and showed him that? Have you failed to help him lead and be that sounding board, loving/ not nagging voice he needs to hear, all the while pointing him to Christ? Have you forgiven him?

Husbands, have you loved your wives? Have you treated her not just as your father-in-law's daughter, but your heavenly Father's beloved daughter? Have you worked hard to put her first in all your human relationships so she knows it and find out what her needs are and how to meet them? Have you been a loving, serving, self-sacrificing head? Or have the buddies, the past-times, and the “me-time” come first? God gave you a suitable helper. Your forefather, Adam, broke out in poetry when he first saw his wife. And maybe you did too as you saw her walk down the aisle towards you. What happened? Do you view her as a beautiful

God-designed helper or as a ball and chain, or a battle-axe? That's not love. Christ loved the church, gave himself up for her, and cleansed her. Have you done the same? Have you loved her more than yourself? Have you apologized to her?

Is it possible to stand apart when it's so hard and we are so sinful? Paul did not mince words as he wrote down God's will for husbands and wives. Paul didn't hesitate to show us that the one who wills us to stand apart is the one who in his Grace and Mercy Set us Apart. Wives, *"the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior."* Wives, you have a **Savior from sin**, from your sins and failures. Jesus died on the cross for you. Your sin is forgiven. You are loved. You can trust. You can respect, even submit. You can forgive, because Christ is the head of the church, and he is your head too. He has set you apart to be his own.

Paul told husbands, *"love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."* Christ did all this for you. Husbands, **he washed you clean of your sin at your baptism and clothed you with his righteousness**. You are radiant, without blemish or even a wrinkle in the sight of God. Your sin has been washed away. You can lead. You can love your wife and give up yourself for her each day because the one who set you apart to stand apart has done this for you!

Paul reminds all of us, *"for we are members of his body."* Married or unmarried, all of you are a part of his body. You are in his family. God cares for all of you perfectly. He loves you perfectly. You are in him. And he will always be with you as you go out from here.

<sup>31</sup> *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."* <sup>e2</sup> For the married, he will be with you, guide you, love you, forgive you and help you live out your roles. God has given you as a gift to one another. You are one flesh. Thank him for that. Pray for your marriage and the marriages of others.

So Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. You stand apart. And that's good. Wives, stand apart. Submit to your husbands out of reverence for Christ and people will see a beautiful reflection of how the church submits to Christ and holds to Christ and his Word even when tough. Husbands, stand apart. Love your wives out of reverence for Christ and the world will see a beautiful reflection of how Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her and does not give up on her but loves her always. **Stand apart because you've been Set apart. Submit and Love out of reverence for Christ.** Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> *The New International Version*. (2011). (Eph 5:21–31). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.