

Submitting to One Another

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[0 : 0 0] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity On the 20th of May 2001 The preacher is Paul Barker His sermon is entitled Submitting to One Another And is from Ephesians chapter 5 Verses 21 to 32 Let's pray Heavenly Father we pray that you will guide us by your spirit That your word may be written in our hearts Not only that we may understand it But even that we may do it For the glory of Jesus Christ our head and our saviour Amen Needless to say this is hardly a popular passage Most brides don't want to say obey And they don't want to say submit Or anything that is different From the vows that their groom is making

At their wedding Because submission conjures up As Bill suggested in that intro Notions often of a struggle A power struggle Resistance Notions of oppression Or male chauvinism All the things that the feminist movement Has worked so hard in recent decades To counter And so many people coming to this passage In the second part of Ephesians 5 Say that St Paul is just being a male chauvinist Probably wasn't married anyway He doesn't know what he's talking about He's reflecting the patriarchal society of his day Where men are in charge But we today in the 21st century Even in the 20th century Are much more liberated Much more sophisticated Much more egalitarian And we're on about equality We're on about our own rights We're on about identity And interchangeability Not hierarchy Not one over the other So many people ignore The teaching of scripture here In the second half of Ephesians 5 But let me say

Not only in the context of marriage The idea of submission Is one that we sit uncomfortably with In our day and age Because we are on about Often in society Independence Not dependence Freedom Equality Resisting authority And that's true in the western world in general And especially I think in Australia Where probably for 220 odd years Or whatever we've been here for We've resisted authority And authoritarian figures And resisted institutions And institutional authority So these words about submission In the general context Not least in marriage Are ones that we all Probably have some difficulty with Some of us Will try and dismiss this As culturally bound And therefore irrelevant To our culture Some of us Might try to play tricks With the language

To make the text Say something other than What it seems at first to say And therefore to sit More comfortably with it And some of us Would be much more willing To take it as it says Today Let's remember though The context As we saw last week As I referred back To the beginning of chapter 4 The context in the letter To the Ephesians Is how Christian people Who've been made Christians By the grace of God Saved by Jesus Christ Are to live a worthy life Of Jesus himself That worthy life Is characterised by unity Between Christian people Men and women Old and young Etc As one of the first things That Ephesians 4 said But it's not a new theme In this letter either Because what Jesus Has done for us By his grace In dying for us Is not only to make us Individually right with God But as chapter 2 Goes on to say God has made us

One body In Christ Together Breaking down All the walls Of hostility Especially those In Paul's day Between Jew and Gentile But any walls Of hostility Between any people Christians are called Not to an individual Relationship with God Only But into a unity One with each other In chapters 4 To the end of the book About how we live A worthy life In Christ Unity is a key theme And so the moral standards That are applied To each one of us As Christians Are standards That seek to feed And encourage Christian unity We are to live As unified Christians A life worthy Of the Lord In contrast To the pagan lives Around us That ought to be Something that's Very distinct In our society Which is such a Secular and pagan society As it was In Paul's day And so we saw Last week The contrast Don't live like this As the pagans do

[5 : 04] But live like this Don't live as fools But live as wise Don't live as though You're drunk with wine But live as though You're filled with the spirit A contrast That will be very clear To the world's eyes That Christians Are different From it The same applies Today as then One of the other themes About how to live In this general context Of submission Is in imitation Of Jesus That was how This chapter In effect began I should really say Imitators of God Therefore be imitators Of God As beloved children An example Had been given In the previous verse At the end of chapter 4 Forgive Because God in Christ Forgave you And then the next example In verse 2 Of chapter 5 Is live in love Because Christ That's God in Christ Has loved us So the imitation Of God And in particular The imitation of Christ Is an important context Generally About how Christians Are to live Worthy lives of Christ

In unity with each other In contrast To the world In that context Then Comes submission There's one more context Too Which I hinted at Last week Last week The instruction was Be filled Or rather Keep on being filled With the Holy Spirit And there were four ways In which that would be seen So if you look up the page Page 952 In the Bibles Verse 18 says But be filled with the Spirit And then come some verbs That are dependent Upon being filled That is If you're filled with the Spirit This is what it'll look like And we saw in particular Three of them last week Singing psalms and hymns And spiritual songs Among yourselves To each other Building each other up Secondly Singing and making melody To the Lord In your hearts And thirdly Giving thanks to God The Father At all times And for everything In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ But there's a fourth The trouble is Our translation

Separates it Because verse 21 Is in the same Grammatical pattern As verses 19 and 20 That is Be filled with the Spirit That will be seen by Singing and making melody Sorry Singing psalms and hymns And spiritual songs Secondly Singing and making melody In the heart Thirdly Giving thanks And fourthly Being subject to each other That is It's actually a participle Not a command Being subject or submissive To one another Out of reverence for Christ Then What happens From verse 22 All the way through To chapter 6 Verse 9 As we'll see next week And the week after Paul is giving examples Of submission One to another Out of reverence for Christ That's the context For the wives and husbands bit It's worth a brief reflection About submission Submission Is probably the opposite Of resisting In Greek The word to resist That comes in other places

Not here Is a Greek word Anti-tasso But this word Submit Is hupotasso The two words Are related So you either Resist Somebody Some authority Or you accept it You submit to it So it's It's an And it's an active Idea It is about Giving oneself up To somebody else's Right Or authority Or position Or whatever But it's not It's not becoming A carpet To be walked All over Either It's not a It's not a Subservience In the sense that Somebody else Just pulls All the strings There is an Acceptance of Somebody else's Authority And right And position But it's not a Total being Walked over By them Either Now that's All the context It's important To get that Context right So when Paul Is dealing With husbands

And wives He's dealing With Christian Husbands And Christian Wives Married To Christian Wives And Christian Husbands And he's Dealing with them In the context Of the church About how to Live lives In imitation Of God In Christian Unity In worthiness Of the Lord In contrast To pagan Lives And in the Context where Christians Submit to Each other Out of Revenence For Christ Now verses 22 to 24 Are addressed To the wives A friend of Mine when he Once preached On this passage A couple of Years ago Told me Afterwards That he Then told All the Non-wives To go Out in the Hall Have a Cup of Tea And coffee And he'd Call them When it was Back in The husbands Would come Back in And all the Rest would Go out Well I'm Not sure That I'd Ever get You back So we're Not going To do That There's Actually some Value in Hearing what Paul says To each Of the Other Whether we're A wife Or a Husband Or neither Because in

[10:07] A sense This is One example Of how Each one Of us Is to Submit To each Other Out of Reverence For Christ So wives Then verses 22 to 24 Be subject Or submit To your Husbands As you Are to The Lord For the Husband is The head Of the Wife Just as Christ Is the Head Of the Church The body Of which He is The Saviour Just as The church Is subject To Christ So also Wives ought To be In everything To their Husbands Notice That a Wife Is to Be submissive To her Husband It doesn't Say women Submit To men It doesn't Say wife Submit To all Men But rather A wife Is to Submit To her Husband The reason That's Given In verses 23 and 24 Is a Parallel Between Christ And the Church And the Husband And the Wife I remember When I was At school A long time Ago We did

IQ Tests And I Remember We had To fill In the End Of the Statement Like this As a Hoof Is to The Horse So is Something To a Person And we'd All scratch Our heads And thinking Well what is The equivalent Of a Horse's Hoof For a Person And it's A foot I think And that's Sort of The analogy Or the link That St.

Paul has got Here As Christ Is To the Church So is The Husband To the Wife Not as A man To a Woman But as The Husband Is To the Wife And the Key word That links It is The word Head That's Not a Popular Word Some People have Tried to Say that The word Here Head Has the Sense Of Source As in S-O-U-R-C-E Not S-A-U-C-E And for Those who Can't Spell Anyway Source As in Origin Not Tomato The Trouble Is With That Is That The Word That's Translated Here As Head Is Used Elsewhere In Ephesians Chapters 1 And 4 With The Sense Of Authority Rather Than Origin And The Natural Reading Of The Word Here Is To Do With Authority Not The Origin Of Something As Christ Has Headship Over The Church So Will A Husband Have Headship

Over His Wife It's In Everything Maybe Even In Temple Matters As Well As Spiritual Matters Verse 24 Says It's Not That Limited Now We Could Say That This Is Just Cultural We Could Just Say That Paul Is Reflecting The Patriarchal Society Of His Day The Trouble The Trouble The Patriarchal Society At All In Fact Much Of The Ethics Of The Bible Of The New Testament Runs Counter To The Culture Of His Day And Age And Indeed These Words In These Two Paragraphs At The End Of Chapter Five Do Not Just Blandly Reflect The Culture Of Paul's Day At All Though His Culture Was Much More Patriarchal Than Ours Is Today Where Male Headship Was Not Really Something That Would Be Challenged All That Much Whereas It Would Be Much More Today Nonetheless The Idea That People Christians Are To Submit

One To Another Would Actually Run Quite Counter To The Culture Of Paul's Day As It Would To Ours As Well But We Also Must Reflect The The Theological Basis Of This And This Is What Often Forgotten And Tossed Out By Those Who Say Paul's Just Reflecting Culture Paul Is Saying Here The Reason Why Wives Are Subject To Their Husbands Is Not Because That's How It's Done In Our Society As Though Paul If He Came Here Said Look I Realize In Today's Day And Age Your Wives Don't Submit To Husbands No One Else Does And Reflect Your Society He's Not Saying That The Reason That He Gives Is A Theological Reason That Is The Relationship Between Jesus Christ And The Church The Way A Wife Is To Submit To Her Husband Is In A Parallel With The Way The Church Christians Submit To Jesus Christ Its Lord And Its Head And Its Saviour It Is A Willing And

[14 : 32] Free Submission Paul Does Not Say To Husbands Your Wife Must Submit To You He Says To Wives You Submit Yes It's A Command But Their Submission Is To Be Willing Just As Later On He Says Husbands Love Your Wives He Doesn't Say To The Wives Your Husband Must Love You He Addresses Wives It Is Their Responsibility To Submit Not The Husband Responsibility To Enforce Submission And of Course The Reason Why We Submit To Jesus Is Because Of What He's Done For Us Dying For Us Loving Us Giving Up His All For Us For Our Benefit For Our Eternal Benefit Our Submission To Christ Our Submission To Jesus That Does Not Apply To A Husband But The Sense In Which We Willingly Submit To Jesus Is Out Of Gratitude For The Extraordinary Grace He's Extended To Us As Paul Detailed In Chapter 2

We're Fools If We Don't Want To Submit To Him So Good Is He For Us That's The Parallel And I Think Why Paul Writes These Words To Wives And To Husbands But For Everybody To Read And Why I Think It's Wrong For Me To Kick You Husbands Out Because These Are Only Addressing Lies Is Because There's An Implication Here We Submit To Christ Because Of The Family Then Model Yourself On Jesus But For You Wives Still Before We Move On To The Husbands When Did You Last Think Of Your Husband In A Sense Parallel To Jesus Wives Submit To Your Husbands As Christians Submit To Christ The Head Of The Church When Did You Last Submit To Your Husband As To Christ Let

Me Encourage You Not To Be Sucked In By Our Age Which Refuses To Submit Anyone To Anything Be Brave And Willingly Submit Be Strong And Yield To Your Husband As Your Head Be Bold And Regard Your Husband In A Sense As You Regard Christ Now The Clash With Paul's Culture Is Even More Clear In The Next Paragraph He Does Not Simply Reflect What His Society Was About These Words Would Have Jarred Then Perhaps Even More Than They Jar Today Husbands Love Your Wives He Doesn't Say Rule Dominate Enforce Submission Exercise Authority Oppress Be The Head Love But He Says Love And He Says It Three Times

Verse 25 At The Beginning Of His Statement To Husbands Verse 28 In The Middle When He Goes From Parallel To Jesus To The Husbands And Then At The End To Wrap It All Up He Cannot Fail To See That The Key Thing For A Husband Is To Love His Wife And That Was Rare In The Ancient World And Not Rare In The Sense Of Some Sort Of Emotional Love But Rare For There Be Any Ethical Charge For A Husband To Love His Wife This Is Unusual In Paul's Culture And Of Course Love Luck Submission Is To Be A Character Of All Christians Just As Verse 21 Said To All The Christians Be Subject Submit To One Another And Then He Gave An Example Wives Submit To Husbands So Also Paul Has Already Said In Chapters 4 And 5 Earlier In Chapter 5 That All Christians Utter Love Husbands You're One Example Of Love So Wives Are Not

Free From Loving Just As In A Sense Husbands Are Not Free Going On Here So Paul Said Back In Chapter 4 Verse 2 To All The Christians That They Are To Live A Life Worthy Of The Lord Bearing With One Another In Love And The Same Thing At The Beginning Of Or Later On In Chapter 4 Verse 15 Speaking The Truth In Love We're To Grow Up Into Christ Building Itself Up In Love The End Of Verse 16 And The Same Thing In Chapter 5 Verse 2 We Are To Be Imitators Of God And Live In Love As Christ Loved Us And Now The Precise Example That He Uses For The Husbands For Their Love Of Their Wives Is Again Jesus Christ But It's A Subset And A Specific Example Of What All Christians Should Be Like Love Like Christ Loved Us So Now We Get To A Specific Example Again Christ Is The Example Indeed Verses 25 To 27

[19 : 34] Really It's All About Jesus Not About Husbands He Comes Really Back To The Husbands In Verse 28 Onwards So He Says Just As Christ Loved The Church And Gave Himself Up For Her In Order To Make Her Holy By Cleansing Her With The Washing Of Water By The Word So As To Present The Church To That's Quite A Long Digression In A Sense Before He Goes Back To Say Now Husbands In The Same Way Love Your Wives There's Quite A Substantial Model That Jesus Is Here For Husbands Calvary Love If You Like Cross Love The Love That Jesus Exhibited By Dying For Us By Giving Himself Up For Us By Giving All That He Had For Us That Is The Love That Husbands Are To Exercise For Their Wives You Don't See Much Of That In The Magazines In Our News Agents And Supermarkets You Don't See Much Of That Sort

Of Love Being Commended On The Soap Operas And On Hollywood And The TV Screens That Is A Deep Love Husbands You Are To Love Your Wives Like That That That Is Not Patriarchal Domination That Is Loved Aimed But That Is What Jesus Love For Us Was About Our Good Our Benefit Notice The Three Purposes That Are Stated In Verses 26 And 27 Jesus Loved Us And Gave Himself Up For Us Firstly In Order To Make Her Holy By Cleansing Her That Is From Sin With The Washing Of Water I Think An Allusion To Baptism By The Word The Word Of God The Scriptures That Is Jesus Love For Us Which Is To Be The Model Of How Husbands Are To Love Their Wives Was For The Sake Of The Church Becoming Cleansed And Washed And Pure And That Has The Purpose In Verse 27 So That

The Church Would Be Presented To Himself In Splendor You Look At The Church Today It Doesn't Look Very Splendored But Jesus Goal In Dying For The That's What Jesus Work For The Church Is About One Day The Church Will Be Like That In Heaven Holy Without Blemish Spot Or Wrinkle Presented In Splendor Before Jesus The Grim That's

Where The Book Of Revelation Is Heading Towards That Great Wedding Feast When The Church Finally Is Prepared And Adorned Ready For Jesus Christ And That Is The Model For Husbands Loving Their Wives It's Not A Selfish Love It's Not A Sappy Love It's Not A Domineering Love Or An Oppressive Love It Is A Love That Seeks From Beginning To End The Best For The Other For The Partner For The Wife So Paul Goes On In Verse 28 In The Same Way Husbands Should Love Their Wives As They Do Their Own Bodies That Is Because The Church Is Actually Jesus Body Paul Picks Up An Image That He Used Back In Chapter 2 So At One Level He's Saying The Church Is The Bride Of Christ But Not Only That The Church Is Also The Body Of Christ And Here I Think Theologically He's Got In Mind That When Two People Get Married They Become One Flesh Going Way Back To Genesis Chapter 2 So Not Only Is The Church The Bride Of Christ He's The Husband

Of The Wife The Church But So Too Is The Church His Body One Flesh One Unity Which Is One Of These Things In The Letter To The Ephesians So Again That's Why Paul Goes On To Say That The Husband Is To Love Like Christ As They Do Their Own Bodies He Who Loves His Wife Loves Himself Doesn't Say He Who Loves Himself Loves His Wife But He Who Loves His Wife Loves Himself That's How Close The Union Is To Be Between Husband And Wife For No One Ever Hates His Body But He Nourishes And Tenderly Cares For Just As Christ Does For The Church Because We Are Members Of His Body That Is We Belong To Jesus Body We Belong To The Church And Paul Quotes From Genesis For This Reason A Man Will Leave His Father And Mother And Be Joined To His Wife And The Two Will Become One Flesh This Is A Great Mystery And I'm Applying It To Christ And The Church He's Saying It's A Great Mystery Humanly That A Husband And Wife Can

[24 : 35] Become In A Sense One Flesh But Ultimately He's Saying The Same Applies For Jesus And The Church Becoming One Body Together In Christ So Then He Says Each Of You Should Love His Wife As Himself That Is No Easy Love I'm Not Sure That The Husbands Get The Easy Part Of These Instructions I Don't Mean To Say That Wives Have Got It Easy Submitting Is Easy Far From It But I Don't Think The Husbands Have An Easy Way Out Either I Think If Husbands Love Is To Be Love As Christ Loved Every Marriage On Earth Would Be Transformed Every Marriage On Earth Would Be Transformed Husbands Who Are Here Tonight When Did You Last Love Your Wives Like This When Did You Last Give Yourself Up For Your Wife So That She Could Be Presented Holy

And Blameless On That Final Day Before Christ When Did You Last Regard Your Wife As Your Own Body And Nourish Her And Look After Her Like That Human As for For Those login Amen in male is either a brute or as weak as dishwater trying to be a brute.

For you men and husbands be strong by loving your wife. Be brave by giving yourself up for her.

Be courageous and tenderly care for her and nourish her. Paul summarises at the end for husbands you should love your wife as yourself.

At the end of verse 33 and a wife should fear literally her husband. Fear is greater than respect. That's a little bit too remote and formal. Well let me conclude with a few comments.

[27 : 00] These verses have an exceptionally high view of marriage. Marriage between a man and a woman on earth is a model of the relationship between Jesus and the church and that is a gospel relationship.

Jesus dying for the church so the church would be forgiven. So marriage on earth is to be a reflection of the gospel of Jesus Christ imitating him both wives and husbands indeed imitating him.

Marriage is not unimportant. Marriage is not something to be entered into lightly or carelessly the prayer book says in a wedding service. But it is the most important relationship any human will ever find.

It's not necessarily saying it's right for everybody or the ideal for everybody to pursue. But it is certainly not something that is unimportant or trivial or light.

It is the most important relationship. The highest view of marriage you will ever find are these words. because it models Jesus himself loving this world and the church.

[28 : 13] Notice too though that these words have some limits. Limits in the sense that it's describing an ideal. A Christian wife a Christian husband seeking together to live like this.

But what if mutual submission breaks down? What if love dries up? What if a wife is insubordinate? What if a husband is a brute or weak as dishwater?

What if he's authoritarian and oppressive? What if the partner is not a Christian? These words in a sense don't simply apply in those situations.

Not to say that they're irrelevant but what Paul is urging here is the ideal of a Christian wife with a Christian husband both together seeking to imitate Christ in submission and love.

But thirdly these passages or these words have no limit. That is there is no limit placed on love. Paul does not say to the husbands love your wife for this period of time or this deep.

[29 : 17] In fact love is limitless by the very example of Jesus as its basis. And the same for submission. He does not say to wives be subject to your husbands only so long as they love you or only so long as they're Christian or only so long as this submission is limitless.

Indeed wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. This is unconditional love and unconditional submission. He's not talking about a contest where the wife's going to say I'll submit to you if you love me I'll love you only if you submit to me.

This is talking to a Christian husband and a Christian wife who freely are to love without limit and submit without limit. Fourthly notice how Christ centred these words are.

The example at every point is Jesus Christ. Indeed his demonstration of love and giving himself up is not just a demonstration of love for husbands but is almost a model really of submission for wives submitting himself to the will of the Father to die for our benefit.

All the way through these words it oozes modelling Jesus Christ. Fifthly let me say that these words are not anti-women.

[30 : 44] Indeed the husbands get more attention than the wives that may suggest that they needed more correction than the wives. This is about submission not to an ogre but a lover.

It is about free and willing submission in a Christian marriage where the husband is living like Christ and the wife is also. It is patriarchal.

The husband is the head. Can't be inverted just as Christ is the head of the church and that can't be inverted either. But it is a God-ordered patriarchy of loving and selfless relationship.

And finally this is an ideal to strive towards. Submission is for all Christians verse 21 especially wives.

Love is for all Christians verse 2 especially husbands. Submit and love are different. They're not interchangeable though they do overlap. proper submission will be loving and proper love will have elements of submission about it too.

[31 : 55] Both of them in some sense are about giving oneself up for somebody else. But they are different and in the end the husband is the head of the wife.

these words anticipate in a sense the final day when Christians will stand in splendour without spot or blemish or wrinkle or anything else like that holy and pure and perfect at the wedding feast of Jesus Christ the Lamb.

We are his bride. He loved us by giving himself up for us by dying for us on a cross so that we may have an eternal relationship with him but not just any old relationship a perfect relationship where he loves us we submit to him and we are found perfect and holy and blameless in his sight forever.

That's why these words in the end are just so important because if we try and dismiss them or sideline them in the end we dismiss and sideline the gospel of Jesus dying for us and loving us.

Amen.