

“Spirit-Filled Living, pt 3”

Ephesians 5:21

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“be filled with the Spirit...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:18, 21; ESV)

In Ephesians 5:21 Paul gives the fourth result of being filled with the Holy Spirit... living with a submissive attitude. This is a basic Christian virtue that is absent among unredeemed humanity, but it is a fundamental requirement for anyone desiring to be godly and like Christ.

1. The meaning of submission: deferring, yielding, and bending toward others.

- a. *hupotasso*—*hupo* = ‘under,’ + *tasso* = ‘arrange, align’ — so to “align yourself under someone else; get in line under their authority, fall in”; a military term; can be translated as “deferring, yielding, subjecting oneself, subordinating, bending, submitting, getting under.”
- b. This word is used of believers being submissive to: i) the government - *Romans 13:1,5*; ii) God - *Hebrews 12:9*; iii) Christ – *Ephesians 5:24*; iv) the Word of God - *Romans 8:7*; v) church leaders - *1 Peter 5:5*; vi) each other - *1 Peter 5:5*; also used: vii) of women being submissive in church - *1 Corinthians 14:34*; viii) of wives to their husbands - *1 Peter 3:1*; ix) of demons to Christ - *Luke 10:17*; x) of the world to Christ - *1 Corinthians 15:28*; xi) of Christ to the Father - *1 Corinthians 15:28*.

2. The mandate for submission: an ongoing

obligation for every believer

“submitting to one another”

3. The model of submission: Christ Jesus the Lord

“Christ Jesus...humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:5, 8; cf. John 5:30)

“My Father...not as I will, but as Thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39)

4. The motive for submission: fear of Christ our

Savior and Judge

“out of reverence for Christ”

Digging Deeper

5:21—“and be subject” [NASB]; “submitting yourselves” [KJV]; “Submit” [NIV]; “submitting” [NKJV; ESV]; the participle here is *hupotassomenoi* [υποτασσομενοι], present tense, middle voice [the preceding 4 participles are active voice] of *hupotasso*; the root is from the tag- [ταγ-] word group signifying order or arrangement (see *tagma* in 1 Corinthians 15:23) often used in the military sense denoting a body of troops which can be disposed according to the decision of the commanding officer; as present tense it connotes an ongoing pattern of behavior; as a participle the *-ing* ending rendered in the English is the best translation here; KJV adds “yourselves” to the translation which is an accurate reflection of the middle voice sense requiring the subject’s participation to carry out/participate in the command of the governing verb which is “be filled” in 5:18; the NIV unfortunately puts a period before 5:21, separating this participle from the previous 4 and the governing verb in 5:18—NAS, KJ and NKJ put a semi-colon between 5:20-21 which is a tad better (the NAS adds the

conjunction ‘and’ to highlight this participle’s relation to 5:18), but ESV is best with simply a comma—there is no punctuation in the Greek text...Greek determined breaks and transitions in thought by context and meaning, not with punctuation.

“one another”; “one to another” [KJV]—the reciprocal dative pronoun *allelois*; every person is in the chain of authority and submission somewhere—no one is exempt from being submissive except the Father Himself; the reciprocal pronoun conveys the concept of “mutual submission”; to resist and defy submission is to be a rebel in God’s hierarchy of established authority...to function in a healthy way as a social being, having a submissive attitude towards others is a prerequisite...this is selfless living, not self-centered living—live for others, not self—this is NOT the American way.

“in the fear of Christ” [NASB]; “in the fear of God” [KJV; NKJ]; “out of reverence for Christ” [NIV; ESV]; King James has “God” in the English but the Greek word is the objective genitive *Christou*, “Christ”, not *Theou/God*; “fear” is the dative of the noun *phobos*, from which we get the English word “phobia”; this noun is used 47 times in the NT, 4 times followed by one of the persons of the Trinity as an objective genitive (Acts 9:31; Romans 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:11) indicating a sense of awe, fear and reverence for God as infinite, holy, awesome Creator, Judge, Lord and Savior to whom we are accountable (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; 1 Peter 1:13-21); we treat others in light of our attitude and relationship with Christ.