**Brought to Life; Brought Together**

**Walking Worthy: Spirit Filled Submission**

**Ephesians 5:18-21**

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We are continuing our series in Ephesians, Brought to Life; Brought Together. As we have said, Ephesians can be divided into two sections, chapters one through three describe what *God has done in us* through Christ while chapters four through six call us to *live out what God has done in us*. We are in 5:18-21, looking at being filled with the Spirit. Today we are looking at Spirit Filled Submission. My big idea is Spirit filled people are submissive people.

**Review**

Recapping from the last few weeks, this present evil age seeks to draw us away from Christ so we have to be careful, walk wisely or you will be drawn away from Christ. One example of walking wisely is seeking to be filled with the Spirit, being filled with God’s power and presence in our lives (Eph 3:15-19). The point of our message today is that Spirit filled people are submissive people. Spirit filled submission is one way to maintain the unity of the Spirit among God’s new humanity, the church (4:3). Remember chapter two, becoming a Christian means becoming a part of and united to God’s new humanity, the church. And being part of God’s people means the church is your tribe, your family, and your people. Paul gives us three characteristics of Spirit filled submission in 5:21.

**Spirit Filled Submission Recognizes God Given Authority**

In the world of the bible, submission to authority is as natural as breathing and just as critical for the existence of an orderly society. In Paul’s mind *everyone* submitted to *someone*. Even the Roman emperor submitted to the gods. God has structured order into the universe and it is necessary for society. So, the biblical writers see that even the authority of a totalitarian government like the Roman Empire was better than no government. So, God calls Christians to submit to their rulers (Rom 13:1-7; 1 Pet 2:13-17) unless what they are demanding violates God’s law. God has also ordered authority in relationships in the church, in marriage and family, and in business that we will look at in the coming weeks.

So what does it mean to submit? In the New Testament, it always means to submit to an authority by complying or obeying that authority. So as a child Jesus submitted to his parents (Luk 2:51). Demons submitted to the disciples (Luk 10:17). Church members submit to their leaders (1 Cor 16:15-16). The universe submits to Christ and he submits to the Father (1 Cor 15:27-28). But here, he says to submit to one another so some suggest he is talking about mutual submission. I do not think so nor do I think he means that we submit to others irrespective of their role in our lives. Submit is always a one directional submission to an authority. So, it is better to see him talking about submitting to appropriate authorities God has placed in your life. Now, that does not mean that we ignore wise counsel from others or reject others exhorting us with biblical truth when we need it. It is foolish to ignore God’s wisdom and biblical truth from those God has placed in your life.

**Spirit Filled Submission Requires Humility**

What distinguishes Christian submission to authority from the world is that biblical submission is tied directly to our relationship to Christ. United to Christ, our identity and value is found in Christ. So submitting to another does not mean that we are less than or inferior. The greatest example of humility and submission is Christ clothing himself with human nature,

*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross* (Phil 2:3-8).

Being submissive requires humility, lifting up others as more important than ourselves, looking out for others, and serving others. That requires God’s power and presence in your life, the fullness of the Spirit!

**Spirit Filled Submission is Rooted in Gospel**

The motive for submitting to the authorities God has placed in your life is out of reverence for Christ or literally, the fear of Christ. The clearest illustration of what the fear of God is and is not is when Israel is at Mount Sinai (Ex 20:18-20).

***18****Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off* ***19****and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.”* ***20****Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.”*

Israel was afraid when they saw God’s power and presence. They feared God’s voice would kill them so they asked Moses to be their mediator. But Moses challenged them, do not fear God because he is testing you so that you would fear God and obey him. There is a fear of God that causes us to turn from Him in unbelief and there is a fear of God that draws us to Him in faith so that you obey him. The difference is this: do I believe God, who his holy and just, is against me or do I believe God who has gracious included me in his covenant and so is for me? The fear of God for Christian recognizes he has every right to condemn me but he has graciously saved me so I run from death in sin to life in him.

The fullness of the Spirit is displayed in submission to the authorities God has placed in your life. Spirit filled people are submissive people.

Response:

* Are you seeking to be filled with the Spirit?
* Is your life characterized by Spirit filled Submissiveness?
* How is God speaking to you?

**Life Group Questions:**

1. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit (see Eph 3:15-19)?
2. How are we filled with the Spirit?
3. What are the three results or expressions of being filled with the Spirit?
4. What is Spirit filled submission? What does it look like?
5. Does the command, “submit,” make you feel joyful or angry? Why?
6. How should it make you feel?
7. How can Christians know if or when they should not submit to unjust or corrupt authority? What guidelines apply?
8. How does one in authority rightfully lead without being overbearing or abusive?
9. How does a person rightfully submit without becoming a doormat? When is it right to say “no” to serving others?
10. How is God speaking to you in this message?
11. How does this passage relate to you own discipleship?
12. How does this message help you in making disciples