

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, October 12, 2025

Submit Yourselves One to Another in the Fear of God

Ephesians 5:14-21 *“14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. 15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, 16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. 18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; 19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; 21 **Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.**”*

Submitting to one another, in obedience to God, with reverential fear, is part and parcel of the New Testament church. It is life and health for us to willingly submit ourselves to one another, in as much as Christ is found and heard in the midst of His church. This willing submission is a critical part of what makes us separate, sanctified and holy in the midst of a world that is dedicated to the proposition of the willful, stubborn pursuit of the desires of the heart above all else. This submission has to be practical, and in those places that rub directly against the pride and lust of our flesh; otherwise, it wouldn't be submission. We can take it to the bank that 1) submitting to each other is not pleasant to our flesh, and 2) denying ourselves, and submitting to one another is not optional, if we are going to claim the name of Christ. When we resist God in this matter, we despise the body, and set her at naught; we despise her counsels, her wisdom, her admonitions, her reproofs, her straight paths. Beloved friends, let us take care to examine ourselves, lest we look up one day and find that we resist and despise her, because we are not of her. As Christians assembled together in faith, we are duty bound to watch diligently, consider, provoke and exhort one another continually. To do otherwise is to hate one another, and put the candlestick in jeopardy. Consider these sober scriptures regarding this duty that we must continually execute upon:

- **Hebrews 10:22-27** *“22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) 24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. 26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”*

- **Hebrews 3:12-19** *“12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; 15 While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. 16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. 17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*
- **Hebrews 12:14-17** *“14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; 16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”*

Consider the various metaphors utilized in the scriptures to teach us the nature of the church: body, house, vine, flock, army. As I read through these scriptures, think about how tightly integrated the constituent members of these various entities are, and what that teaches us about the need for us to submit to one another fully, with no resistance.

- The church is a **body**:
 - **1Corinthians 12:12-26** *“12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? 18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20 But now are they many members, yet but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely*

parts have more abundant comeliness. 24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: 25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

- Christ is the head of this sanctified body. We are members one of another, each one supporting the body with our peculiar design and function. Any member that consumes nourishment from the body, but does not supply her needs according to his function and ability, is a tumor that will surely be excised by the Great Physician.
- The church is a **house**:
 - **1Peter 2:4-12** *"4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. 7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. 9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: 10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; 12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."*
 - The rest of this chapter, and much of the next go on to detail our duty to submit ourselves.
 - **Ephesians 2:19-22** *"19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."*

- Christ is the foundation of this holy building. We are lively, fitly framed stones – each one supporting the overall structure. Intricately crafted such that we fit together without tool, according to God’s perfect design. The Lord dwells in the midst of that spiritual house. If we aren’t functioning as a lively stone in that house, then we aren’t a part of the house, and we are only fit for the scrap heap.
- The church is a **vine**:
 - **John 15:1-8** *“1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. 3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. 8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”*
 - Christ is the Root that gives life and sustenance to the branches of this peculiar vine. If we are fruitless branches, then we encumber the vine, and are good for nothing but to be cut out of the vine and burned.
- The church is a **flock**:
 - **John 10:1-18** *“1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. 4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. 5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. 6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. 7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. 10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. 11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd,*

whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. 13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. 17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

- Christ is the Shepherd of this set apart flock, giving life, protection, and guidance to the sheep. If we stubbornly reject the safety of the sheep fold, then we show ourselves to be goats.
- The church is an **army**:
 - **2Timothy 2:3,4** “3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”
 - **Hebrews 2:10-13** “10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”
 - **Song of Solomon 6:9,10** “9 My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. 10 Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?”
 - Christ is the Captain of this spiritual army. If we do not stand together, making up the hedge according to the preparation and instruction of our Captain, then we are treasonous enemies of the King.

Consider how each of these metaphors demonstrate the essential nature of the members of the church, bound together in our mutual love and service to our head, foundation, root, shepherd, and captain; relying upon and submitting to one another. Willful solo acts need not apply.

Ephesians 4:1-6 *“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2 with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”*

This spirit of submission must come from a willing heart, that is set upon God and His Kingdom. No one can have that desire on your behalf. No one can force you to have it. It is dangerous folly to try to force someone to submit to the body. Our duty is to plainly, and practically teach the commandments of God, and hold accountability with patience and love. This work is unpleasant to the flesh. It is unpleasant to submit. It is unpleasant to curb our desires. It is unpleasant to teach someone who is resisting instruction. It is unpleasant to hold accountability (especially as you are being accused of lording over, and worse). It is unpleasant to wrestle with the rebellion of the flesh. All of this is ours to do, and we must submit to the work. Prayerful. Patient. Diligent. Unwavering. If there is a soul that has no heart to submit to God – no faith – then the Lord will reveal that matter, in the process of us obediently putting our hand to this work in faith. We shouldn't be fearful of the outcome. We should be fearful to be derelict in our duty to do the work despite the pain of the process.

James 4:1-10 *“1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. 4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. 5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? 6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”*

Let's consider this sober passage in more detail:

James 4:1 *“From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?”*

- Where we find conflict in the church, we find proud, envious lust lurking in the heart. Take it to the bank. No exceptions. “I am something.” “I want something.”

“I deserve something.” The old man of the flesh declares it. Satan provokes and reinforces it. We lust for things, people, relationships, money, authority, praise, independence, different life circumstances, etc. The list is boundless. So to are the weapons of war that we deploy when we don’t want to be turned away from our desires. Once pride is up, and a covetous desire has taken hold, we will go to great lengths to protect our nasty, selfish flesh. Resist, hide thoughts and activity, deflect, accuse, avoid, lie, manipulate, caucus with those that will comfort us in our desire, and in our resistance of those that would watch and provoke us, etc. Every mechanism we employ does damage to ourselves, and damage to the body. It turns the body from a focused, engaged army following our captain, to a confused, dysfunctional circus, grappling with our flesh. Quarreling in defense of our flesh is the exact opposite of submitting ourselves to one another in the fear of God. The consequences of giving place to this folly are real, and dire.

“2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”

- I want to eat my cake, and have it too! “I want, I want! If I could just have! I want it really bad! I’ve earned it! I’ve worked hard! I’ve suffered so much! I can’t live without it! Others have it! I’ve been a good servant!” Beloved, demanding upon God is a scary place to be. His mercy is the only thing between us, and what we actually deserve: death and hell. If gratifying the flesh is the thing that we are looking to accomplish when we pray, then we will find ourselves in great peril. We can be asking for a perfectly good thing, but if our spirit is to presume upon God, and gratify ourselves, then we will find sorrow in that thing, even if we get what we want. “Give me quail!”
- We should make all of our prayers according to the will of God, meaning that we have to start from the basis that all of our circumstances are appointed to glorify God, and to prepare us for His kingdom. From that perspective, we then frame our prayer to submit to His will, knowing that our desires are tainted by sin, and bound by our myopic view of things. We are presumptuous and foolish to demand that God give us the exact thing that we want, rather than the thing that He has lovingly appointed to glorify Him, and to prepare us for His kingdom.
- **1John 5:14,15** *“14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”*

“4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

- The context of this verse demands that the primary meaning of adultery here is spiritual adultery – idolatry - putting some object of desire above God. There are countless ways that we can do that. Solomon’s physical adultery with his 1000 wives and concubines is reflective of the endless ways that we are prone to commit spiritual adultery. How many ways do we invest our time, money, attention, skills, etc. into things that have nothing to do with the interest of Christ and His kingdom? Not every vain thing in this life is wickedness and spiritual adultery. However 1) when it becomes the object of our heart’s desire, we are courting danger, and 2) when we hear words of warning from our co-elect, it is time to submit first, and ask questions later! Do we want to have friendship with the world, or friendship with Christ, His body, and the heavenly host?

“5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?”

- **Jeremiah 17:9** *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”*
- **Colossians 3:8-10** *“8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:”*
- The “spirit that dwelleth in us” is the old man of the flesh. He is insatiable, and will war against the spirit of God inside of us until we quit this flesh. He dwells in the corner of our heart like some grotesque, monstrous toddler screaming “Give give give!”. We must daily put off that old man, and his deeds. Submitting to the body is a critical means of help that the Lord has provided, and commanded.

“6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

- Submitting to God means that we have to frame ourselves to His will, both the commands that He has left us, and the fact that the events falling out in our lives are intricately and intimately designed according to His will, both for His glory, and for our good. We must start every thought, and everything that we ask of Him with that premise, and a sober, sincere desire for His will to be accomplished. The devil, on the other hand, says: “you are something, and you deserve all that you desire.” He is a liar! Resist him, and submit yourself to God, and to your fellow servants.

“8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”

- Drawing nigh to God – by definition – means pulling away from the carnal mind which is filled with the love of the world and its sordid treasures. (**Romans 8:7, James 4:4**) If we think that we can hold onto Christ and the world at the same time, we are sorely mistaken. To be double minded is to say that we are following after the spirit of God, and putting on the new man, while in action, giving place to the old man, as though those two things can peacefully co-exist. They cannot:
 - **Matthew 6:24** *“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”*
- If we are to serve God acceptably, submitting to one another in the fear of God, then we have to be willing to give up everything that comes in conflict with that service. All that the flesh considers to be gain, is in fact dung, and worthy to be discarded in pursuit of Christ, whenever there is conflict of allegiance. (**Philippians 3:8**)
 - **Luke 14:26-10,33-35:** *“26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. ... 33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. 34 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? 35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”*
- Count the cost. What is worth holding onto, if the price is my soul? What is worth holding onto, if it causes my brother to stumble?
 - **Galatians 5:13** *“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”*
 - **1Peter 2:16** *“16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.”*
- **Ecclesiastes 7:2-6** *“2 It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. 3 Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. 5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. 6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.”*

Philippians 2:14-16 *“14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; 16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.”*

I love you all. Amen.