

# DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

*Verses & Notes April 9, 2008*

*Ephesians 5:21 & 32*

21: [being] subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

32: This mystery is a profound one,  
and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church;

**Introduction:** Today we begin studying some Scriptures that many Christians would just as well St. Paul had not written. Many look at these verses and then just merely ignore them as leftovers from a more primitive, less civilized age, plagued by ignorance and particularly chauvinism, claiming that they no longer apply to our modern enlightened society. Why this avoidance? Because these verses deal with marriage, family, and work, but particularly the more difficult issue of the hierarchical structure within the family. But just look around us, at the myriad of broken marriages and dysfunctional families, and ask the question, are we in fact more civilized and better off in this our modern enlightenment? Maybe we ought to listen to the verses we were discussing today on *Deep in Scripture*.

## House cleaning items...

- Today's Special: "*Catholic for a Reason IV: Scripture and the Mystery of Marriage and Family Life*," edited by Scott Hahn and Regis Flaherty
- We want your input!!! Phone: On air phone number: **1-800-664-5110**  
Off air: **1-740-450-1175**

Email: [marcus@deepinscripture.com](mailto:marcus@deepinscripture.com)

Forum: <http://www.chnetwork.org/forums/forum51>

## REVIEW: Today we're continuing our discussion of Ephesians:

- **In the first three chapters**, St. Paul describes the changes that take place in our lives once we have heard, believed, and then were sealed with the Holy Spirit in baptism. Our relationship with God, with other baptized believers, and with ourselves has been changed by grace. By grace we were saved from our old life / nature and made children of God, full members of His family, members of the Body of Christ, the Church.
- **In the second half of Ephesians**, St. Paul exhorts the newly baptized Gentile believers how they must live out this new life, which requires surrender and faithful obedience. They must change how they live in relationship to God, to each other, and to themselves. St. Paul essentially summarized this in 4:22-24,

*22: Put off your old nature  
which belongs to your former manner of life  
and is corrupt through deceitful lusts,  
23: and be renewed in the spirit of your minds,  
24: and put on the new nature,  
created after the likeness of God  
in true righteousness and holiness.*

- **Last week we considered verses 18-21 in which St. Paul distinguishes between the lifestyles of two different kinds of gatherings:**
  - The pagan gatherings, religious or otherwise, of their past, and now the new gatherings of the Ecclesia, the Church, of which they have become members through baptism
  - Putting off their old nature and putting on the new includes putting behind them practices, habits, customs of their old way of life that are incompatible with the new.
  - To be able to do this, they need to be "renewed in the spirit of their minds"; in other words, their consciences need to be reformed / catechized to understand what it means to live as a Christian.

- This continues to be true for all converts to the Church, whether baptized as babies or adults:
  - If as babies, then the parents / godparents accept the responsibility of forming their consciences / bringing them up in the faith.
  - If as adults, then there's the added difficulty of changing bad habits, breaking old attachments & passions; relearning values & customs; virtues vs. vices.
- **In the text we'll be studying for the next few weeks, we'll be examining how these newly baptized Gentile believers were to "renew the spirit of their minds" / reform their consciences in the matters of marriage, family, and work.**
  - This week we'll focus on some important background/contextual issues, which will help us better understand and apply the next twenty verses to our lives today.
  - Then we'll consider separately husbands, wives, children, slaves, and masters.

### Some important background / contextual issues:

#### (1) "Lenses of interpretation"

- How can we be sure that we are accurately hearing & applying these verses to our lives today?
  - My view when I preached this text as a Presbyterian pastor (1990):  
 Scripture → History → Culture → our lives
  - As a Catholic:  
 The Church → Sacred Tradition & Sacred Scripture → our lives

#### (2) The Mystery of the Church: the Body of Christ (32)

*"This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church."*

- The mystery to which he is referring is specifically the unity of the Church, the Body of Christ; the oneness of marriage is based on the same mystery of this oneness we share, Gentiles and Jews, as baptized members of the Church.

*Eph 3: 4-6, "When you read this you can perceive my insight into **the mystery of Christ**, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that is, **how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.***

*(Later in 4:1-6, he describes this unity & how it must be maintained.)*

*Rom 12:3-5, "For by the grace given to me I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him. For **as in one body we have many members**, and all the members do not have the same function, so **we, though many, are one body in Christ**, and individually members one of another."*

*1 Cor 12: 12-14, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit **we were all baptized into one body—Jews and Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.** For the body does not consist of one member but of many"*

*1 Cor 12:27-28, "Now **you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.** And God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues."*

*Col 1:24, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of **his body, that is, the church.**"*

- To understand and appreciate the oneness of marriage, one must first recognize marriage within the context of the Body of Christ;
  - In the same way that the living body is made up of cells, so the Body of Christ is made up of the cells of its families / marriages / communities;
  - All of these are called to eagerly maintain the unity of the Church by living it out within the family, marriage, and communities.;
  - When the unity of the Church is questioned or reinterpreted, so goes the understating of unity within the family; and vice versa!

### (3) The hierarchical structure of the Church / the Body of Christ:

- This would of course require a larger / longer discussion, but again, accepting the authority of the Church (as established by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit) as the prime, infallible interpreter of Scripture and truth, then we recognize that the Church has by hierarchically structured from the beginning, continuing on the hierarchical structure of OT Israel.

**Ephesians 4:11-13**, "And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

**Ignatius of Antioch (Letter to the Magnesians 2; 13:1-2 [ca. A.D. 107])** "Take care to do all things in harmony with God, with the bishop presiding in the place of God and with the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles, and with the deacons, who are most dear to me, entrusted with the business of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father from the beginning and is at last made manifest ... Take care, therefore, to be confirmed in the decrees of the Lord and of the apostles, in order that in everything you do, you may prosper in body and in soul, in faith and in love, in Son and in Father and in Spirit, in beginning and in end, together with your most reverend bishop; and with that fittingly woven spiritual crown, the presbytery; and with the deacons, men of God. Be subject to the bishop and to one another as Jesus Christ was subject to the Father, and the apostles were subject to Christ and to the Father; so that there may be unity in both body and spirit."

**Irenaeus (Against Heresies 4:26:2, 33:8[A.D. 189])**. "It is necessary to obey those who are the presbyters in the Church, those who, as we have shown, have succession from the apostles, those who have received, with the succession of the episcopate, the sure charism of truth according to the good pleasure of the Father. But the rest, who have no part in the primitive succession [of bishops] and assemble wheresoever they will, must be held in suspicion....The true gnosis [knowledge] is the doctrine of the apostles, and the ancient organization of the Church throughout the whole world, and the manifestation of the body of Christ according to the succession of bishops, by which succession the bishops have handed down the Church which is found everywhere" ).

- To understand and appreciate the hierarchical structure of marriage, one must first recognize marriage within the context of the Body of Christ;
  - In the same way that the living body is made up of cells, so the Body of Christ is made up of the cells of its families / marriages / communities;
  - All of these mirror the hierarchical structure of the Church;
  - When the hierarchical structure of the Church is questioned / abandoned, so goes the hierarchical structure of the family; and vice versa!

### (4) The underlying requirement of mutual submission within the Body of Christ: (21)

"[being] subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

- In many translations, this verse is combined with the verses that we're studying today, vss 22-33, but we included it in the previous context because of the parallel tenses of the verbs:
  - "addressing ... singing ... giving thanks ... Being subject" are all participles.
  - What follows beginning in verse 22 about marriage, family, and work is a more specific application of St. Paul's more general thoughts in verse 21.

- Note that all of the New Testament letters call for this Same mutual submission.
- This is based on living out Christ's instructions: John 13:34-35  
*"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

**(5) In this verse, another important underlying assumption:**

*"[being] subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

- Note that the Greek word translated here as "reverence" = "phobio" = usually "fear";
  - Beneath true reverence is the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom!  
*Sir.1: 9-10, "The fear of the Lord is glory and exultation, and gladness and a crown of rejoicing; The fear of the Lord delights the heart, and gives gladness and joy and long life."*  
*Matt 10:28, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."*  
*Acts.9: 31, "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Sama'ria had peace and was built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied."*  
*Rom.3:18, "There is no fear of God before their eyes."*  
*2Cor.7:1, "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God."*  
**Clement's First Letter to the Church of Corinth, (21:5-9)** *"Rather than offend God, let us offend foolish and stupid men who exalt themselves and boast with their pretensions to fine speech. Let us reverence the Lord Jesus Christ whose blood was given for us. Let us respect those who rule over us. Let us honor our elders. Let us rear the young in the fear of God. Let us direct our women to what is good. Let them show a purity of character we can admire. Let them reveal a genuine sense of modesty. By their reticence let them show that their tongues are considerate. Let them not play favorites in showing affection, but in holiness let them love all equally, who fear God. Let our children have a Christian training. Let them learn the value God sets on humility, what power pure love has with him, how good and excellent it is to fear him, and how this means salvation to everybody who lives in his fear with holiness and a pure conscience. For he is the searcher of thoughts and of desires. It is his breath which is in us; and when he wants to, he will take it away."*  
**Irenaius, Against Heresies, BK IV, XXV, 3,** *"Those, however, who are believed to be presbyters by many, but serve their own lusts, and, do not place the FEAR OF GOD supreme in their hearts, but conduct themselves with contempt towards others, and are puffed up with the pride of holding the chief seat, and work evil deeds in secret, saying, "No man sees us," shall be convicted by the Word, who does not judge after outward appearance (secundum gloriam), nor looks upon the countenance, but the heart."*  
**The Imitation of Christ, Thomas A' Kempis, (1:20-21)** *"The security of the Saints was grounded in the FEAR OF GOD, nor were they less careful and humble because they were resplendent in great virtues and graces. If you wish to grow in holiness, you must live in the FEAR OF GOD."*
- **But what is meant by fear of God?**
  - Parallel to how people in general become motivated to act:
    1. Fear of pain;
    2. Hope of gain;
    3. Love of wife, children, or someone dear
  - When we turn to God in grace, these translate into:
    - a. Servile fear: fear of hell and damnation;
    - b. Hope of heaven and eternal rewards;
    - c. Filial fear: love of God the Father
  - All three aspects of Fear of God must remain for a formed conscience.

**Why are these underlying issues important to understanding & applying our text?**

- I believe the questioning, deemphasis, or even abandoning of all five of these important assumptions, especially during the twentieth century, has led to many of the problems in the Church and culture and marriage...