

Loyalty and Submission (Part 3)

Love and Submission 'As To Christ'

John W. Ritenbaugh

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We are going to begin this sermon by turning to John 17:17.

John 17:17 Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth.

Please be reminded that the overall subject of this series pertains to a simple easily-understood principle. This principle is that our preparation for the Kingdom of God—our sanctification, our setting apart for God's purposes—is accomplished through subjection to God's truth. Stated in another way, this process prepares us to be leaders in God's kingdom, and in many cases loyalty, or faithfulness, is *the* issue in our preparation.

Subjection to God's commands in turn has an additional more immediate blessing in that it is also the way to success in life here and now. And just as surely as submitting to the truth that two plus two equals four brings us a successful conclusion to a math problem, so does submitting to God's truth bring successful conclusion to relationship problems.

I am using God's instructions regarding marriage to illustrate both of these benefits, and so as we begin this third message in this series I want to remind us that subjection to God and the leadership it produces both begin with devotion to God. Devotion to God is the issue.

For men, subjection begins when the man subjects himself to God's instruction regarding *his* role in marriage regardless of his wife's conduct. We will see more about this later in the sermon.

We, who know God's truth, and have been called of God, are to subject ourselves to God's instruction. Perhaps the most important factor in the previous sermon was, that regardless of whether we are involved in a relationship with a spouse, an employer, or a civil government, we are to subject ourselves to *His* instruction. It does not depend on their being good to us.

We are to look beyond the immediate relationship to the far greater more important relationship with God. It is *that* relationship we are to protect and honor above all others, and thus a husband is to live with his wife according to knowledge, giving honor to her.

"According to knowledge" means "according to the standard *God* has instructed in His word." The word "honor," which sets the standard, is unqualified. It does not say honor her if she is in perfect submission to you in carrying out her responsibility. God says to treat her as though she is a precious jewel because *He* says so.

To the wife, God instructs the same standard. Very simply, she is to subject herself to her husband because it is fitting. It is right. It is proper in the Lord. There are no qualifications given to her either. As we were concluding that sermon, we saw that there are very definite benefits for so doing. Among them is that peace is produced.

Peace within a relationship is of exceeding importance because it is within peace that one has the greatest opportunity to produce the fruits of righteousness. If there is always a sub-current of tension or open anger and warfare, it forces one to be self-centered rather than God-centered, and God's purpose becomes subject to defeat. It is our desire to be sincerely wholeheartedly God-centered that jump-starts us and guides us in the right direction.

The fruit of righteousness is success. When you do things right, they work. It produces success. The success that God desires for us is three-fold: (1) to be a good witness for Him and His way; (2) to be successful in life here and now; and (3) above both of these is that He wants us to be prepared for His kingdom. Believing what He says, and being staunchly loyal to what He says, will produce all of these benefits.

Knowledge of what He says, plus believing what He says, combined with faithfully subjecting ourselves to what He says, produces the truly good things in life. We all learn and grow in the same benefits whether as an employee, whether as one subject to a government, a husband, or the wife. The over-riding issue in all of this is faith in God that expresses itself in a heartfelt personal devotion to Him. A loyal subjection to His instructions in turn produces character and *right* leadership. There is evil leadership as well.

It matters not whether one is a husband, or a wife, the issue from God's point of view is the same. We must be subject to what He assigns. A wife does not practice subjection to her husband because she is dumb, inferior, or weaker. It is because she loves God. She strongly sees it is her duty to *Him* that she is following. It is her service to Him, and it is a good work.

I am not saying that any of this is easy. In many, many cases it really goes against the grain of human nature.

We are going to take a look at a verse aimed at instructing a wife as to the level of her subjection.

Ephesians 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

Understanding this principle can be quite deflating to a man's puffed ego because he would like to think that he is somebody really great. He would like to think that he deserves to be treated with the utmost deference, because he is, after all, the husband.

However, this verse makes the reason for the wife's responsibility quite clear. If she is going to be prepared for leadership in God's kingdom it will be because of her deference to God first and foremost, not to the husband with all of his self-possessed wonderful qualities. The wife is to render the same level of submission to her very imperfect husband as she would give to the perfect Christ, with the exception that she is not to follow the husband into disobedience.

Notice Ephesians 6:5 where a parallel series of verses clarifies a number of things connected to this responsibility.

Ephesians 6:5-8 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your

heart, as unto Christ. Not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men; Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man does, the same shall he receive of the Lord whether he be bond or free.

These verses clarify the attitude that God expects in the submission whether one is subject to a civil government, or as an employee, a husband, or wife. It is to be given according to what it says in these four verses.

The example here involves an employee's relationship with his employer. First I want you to notice that God expects the employee to be subject to his employer as unto Christ, just as in a marriage. This is the same standard the wife is to give her husband as given in Ephesians 5: 22, but here it is addressed directly to an employee, and I might say (though it does not mention it) it is the husband's responsibility in relation to God.

Secondly, I want you to notice the phrase "masters according to the flesh." This phrase implies that the slave (employee) or the civil subject, in reality has at least two masters. In this context, a physical one, and a spiritual one. The physical one is his human boss. The spiritual one is Christ. Again, it is the same circumstance as the wife in relation to her husband.

God's instruction is that the physical one is to be given deference as *if* he were the spiritual one, again with the one caveat—we are not to allow them to drag us into disobedience. Otherwise, our subjection is to be thorough.

This leads to the next phrase—"as unto Christ." This explains why an employee is to be in subjection, and why a wife is to be in subjection to her husband, because the reality is, it *is* unto Christ for the Christian.

The same phrase also explains why Paul gives the instructions regarding the attitudes in which the subjection is to be given. If you understand this, and believe it, you *are* doing it unto Christ. Do you understand that?

The phrase "fear and trembling" may appear to be rather demanding, maybe even threatening, but I want you to see how it is used elsewhere.

Philippians 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

This is exactly the same phrase that is used in Ephesians 6.

Let us carry this forward a little bit more. We are going to go to II Corinthians 7: 15 where this phrase is used again. This one is kind of interesting. In the context Paul is speaking about Titus, his fellow minister, and the Corinthians' relationship with him. Titus' name is mentioned in verse 14.

II Corinthians 7:15 And his [Titus'] inward affection is more abundant toward you [Corinthians], while he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him.

Does this mean that the people were all shook up because Titus was there, and that they were kind of deferring to him like he was a god or something? Not at all. They were not in terror before him.

We are going to go back to I Corinthians 2:3 and we will see that even Paul is subject to this.

I Corinthians 2:3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

Was Paul in terror? Not in the least.

Ephesians 6:5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.

In verse 5, the underlying phrase "fear and trembling" may appear as being rather demanding. However, this is nothing more than old English for "with careful, conscientious and solicitous concern" to do a good job. To do a good job does not apply in every one of those contexts, but it does here. The phrase itself means "with sincere and solicitous, conscientious concern."

Let us translate that into a practical approach. Within the context, (but it also applies in other situations), Paul is saying that an employee's slack-careless hide-under-the rug "this will get us by" approach is not good enough for God's purposes and for us in the future. It must be a sincere, conscientious, solicitous working. Is God careless? Does He do things in a slap-dash manner?

Are we not striving to be in His image? Certainly. Thus we are seeing this applied to the other places where a person is in subjection to a master, to a husband, to God, or whatever, that we are to strive for orderly perfection in all things. We are to get rid of the careless disorganized approach.

The next thing Paul says is that we are to do this with "singleness of heart." Again, because of our subjection to Christ we are to render our service in sincerity and integrity, not in scornful, begrudging, hypocritical sarcasm.

To cap off the instruction, he states that this is indeed the will of God, and we are not to render this service for selfish gain because the master will be impressed and reward us. We are to render it to the Lord because we are devoted to Him.

We used to sing a song in the old, old hymnal that says "Give of your best to the Master." That is a good principle, and that is what Paul is saying here in an overall sense. So a wife is to give of her best to her husband, and the husband is to give of his best to the employer. All of us are

to give of our best to God.

Verse 8 is very interesting because it begins to get into the area of rewards. There is a benefit for doing God's commands.

Ephesians 6:8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man does,
the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

This is the reciprocity principle that runs all the way through from Genesis to Revelation. God is saying that He will respond in kind. It is my guess that because God is God, He will respond with far greater reciprocity than we gave in the first place. Mr. Armstrong used to say "Nobody can out-give God." Doing this "as unto the Lord," with the qualifications that are given here, is going to produce good fruit. Is that not what we want? Yes, because it leads to the abundant life.

One of the major ideas behind all this instruction is that we are not to render this service for selfish gain. Always remember that we are working for the Master.

We are now going to look at the instruction given to the husbands here in Ephesians 5:25. You already know these things, but we are going to go through them again.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved
the church, and gave himself for it.

Ephesians 5:28-29 So ought men to love their wives as their own
bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated
his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the
church.

We are going to look at three words here: (1) nourish, (2) cherish, and (3) love.

The word "nourish" means "to feed, to promote the growth of." The word "cherish" means "to hold dear; to cultivate with affection and care." Do you hear that men? You are to cultivate your wife's affection.

The third word "love" is from the Greek *agapao* (ag-ap-ah-o). This is very important. In this case *agapao* denotes the willing sacrificial giving of the husband for the benefit of the wife without any thought of return. That is a high standard, men.

I have one more thought to add to this. I picked this up in a couple of Protestant commentaries, but it is correct. They said that *agapao* is volitional, meaning that it is subject to the will. This is a *willed* love. It is also a love whose largest component is an action. The Apostle John defined it in I John 5:3 as "the keeping of the commandments."

I once read a book on marriage written by a woman whose name, I think, was Mary Robinson. She had a really good title. She said "Love is what you do." It is not a feeling. This *agapao* is volitional. Love is what you do, and that captures the essence of *agapao*'s meaning. Love is willingly, willfully *doing* the righteous act. Love is consciously subjecting oneself to God and His command. I will tell you, men, there are times when you do not want to do it even though it is

the right thing to do. The old ego gets to working and tries to convince us otherwise.

Think again of what Jesus said in John 14: 15. This is one of the first verses Evelyn and I taught our children when they were growing up. He said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." This word "keep" means to guard, pay heed to, or observe, as in observing the Sabbath. Paying heed to, or observing, does not mean passively watching, but participating in.

Now, as with *agapao* love, activity is implied within the word "keep." In this case "keep" does not mean it is just something you put in your pocket to hold. It is something you are doing, observing actively. "If you love Me, keep (do) My commandments," Jesus is saying.

All of this does not mean that *agapao* has no emotional component whatever. The reason willful action dominates is because it is the right thing to do. This action may even require quite a sacrifice to actually perform.

Ephesians 5:28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.
He that loves his wife loves himself.

Let us look at that word "ought" in verse 28. "So ought men to love their wives." This word "ought" makes this instruction a strong requirement, a duty, within marriage. A man is *required* to do this. Let me give you a clear example of this kind of love. Jesus went through the agony of the beating and the crucifixion, even going so far as to say, "Why have You forsaken Me?"

He also asked, "If it is possible, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done." That is love. It is painful at times. That is why sacrifice is the essence of love. Men, very frequently it is going to have a component within it that your vanity, your ego, or whatever, does not want to do. It may make you look as though she has won. Do you get my drift?

In plain language, God is requiring of the husband that he must always be acting in his wife's best interest to a measure equal to consideration for his own self. So men, think about this: When you are hungry, do you not feed your body? When you are cold, you clothe your body. When you are tired, you rest your body. When you are bored, you amuse your body. When you are sad, you comfort your body. When you are sick, you go to the doctor. When you are sexually aroused, you seek satisfaction for your body.

Men, there is no room in God's standard for selfishness. I think there can be no doubt that in terms of our overall judgment by God that He puts great weight on how well we perform this particular assignment. All of this adds up to the fact that in relation to one's duty within the marital relationship *agapao* is serious business. But there is also a very positive, strong and wonderful payoff. Men, when we do this, we go a long way to defusing what is probably a wife's greatest fear in regard to her subjection to her husband. She fears, that because of selfishness on your part, she is always going to get the short end of the stick.

Men, you know that you have a very strong authority beacon in you that quickly hones in on any breach of submission to you on her part. Let me tell you that she has a similar beacon that immediately perceives selfishness on your part, even if it is unintentional, as a threat to her well-being.

So men, always remember this, that even as your body depends on its Head for satisfaction of its needs within marriage, so does a wife depend on *her* head—her husband—for satisfaction of her needs. What God is saying here, men, is that when you patiently subject yourself to this instruction, you will successfully begin to remove the barriers to her defending herself from your selfishness. That is why God says a man who loves his wife loves himself, because you, men, are going to reap this major benefit in your marriage. It is going to come back to you in spades. Let me put this in a negative light. A selfish man hurts himself through the bitter resentment it will stir in the wife, motivating her to get even. Notice again the word "cherishes" in verse 29.

Ephesians 5:29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church.

I want you to turn to I Thessalonians 2: 5-7. In this context Paul is explaining the attitude in which he treated the Thessalonian congregation.

I Thessalonians 2:5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness.

Paul did not use any deceit on these people. He was open, above board, and as we are going to see, kind and so forth in everything he did toward them.

I Thessalonians 2:6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ.

In other words, he is saying he had the authority to act differently, but he said:

I Thessalonians 2: 7-8 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because you were dear unto us.

In verse 6 Paul used the term "burdensome," meaning that he might have been heavy-handed, or that they might have thrown their authority around. However, he (meaning the ministry) says "We were gentle," and then he uses the word "cherishes" to describe "gentle." This is the same word that appears in Ephesians 5: 29. This is adding to what a husband's responsibility toward his wife is. He is to be cherishing. He is to be gentle. Now *how* gentle?

The word translated "nurse" here does not indicate a professional hired to take care of a child as we might naturally think of as a nurse today. Rather it is referring to a mother nursing her *own* child. The word "children" at the end of that verse does not indicate *any* age children, but specifically *nursing* age children.

Now get the picture here. How gently does a mother treat her nursing-age child? She coos to the child, and does every kind of thing to make the child smile. She treats the child gently and takes care of the child in every way. This is the way Paul said he treated the Thessalonian congregation.

Husbands, take heed to what Paul is saying here. When we feed all of this back into Ephesians 5 to the instructions to the husbands, it means that even the more emotional nature of a woman makes her a better giver of tender affectionate love to her family, but the same affectionate nature makes her crave the same obvious love from her husband. It is the husband's responsibility to give it.

Within the pages of this book on marriage that I mentioned earlier in the sermon, this woman said something that maybe many of you men will not think too kindly of what she said. But she made a succinct statement of something that I think is good. She said, "Women love men. Men love work."

Men, let me try to make this as clear as I can. The wife comes before the work in terms of affection. How many movies or television shows have you seen where they have depicted this very same thing? The wife sues for divorce. She is all frustrated at home. He is out there gaining his millions with the work that he is doing, and he loses his family. It breaks up in divorce all because the job is getting all of his passion and energy.

You do not have to be a millionaire to do that kind of thing. You can work in a garage. You can be a welder and do it. Anybody can do it. The preacher can do it. This is why God says that the wise husband cherishes his wife like he, by nature, cherishes his own body. By following through on this he removes a major part of the source of many fights, because the wife no longer has to compete and defend herself against her husband's selfishness.

When a man subjects himself to this instruction within his family, and especially with his wife, he is learning a major principle of godly leadership in every position God enables him to have in this life, and right on into the Kingdom of God.

We can get a good idea of the way Christ treated people just from this instruction to a husband. He was kind and generous in His thinking. He was thoughtful. I am sure that He answered questions, not with a barb in His voice most of the time, but with kindness.

When a husband forces his wife to analyze whether he loves her, he is hampering her ability to love him. For a man being a husband, this is a serious responsibility. So God is pointing out, men, that rather than being in a position of authoritative selfishness, godly leadership requires doing what is best for the wife. Following that approach produces the right quality of authority. If a wife lives with a selfish or cold husband, she will in all likelihood respond with her own brand of selfish aloofness, thus exacerbating the problem. But a wise wife, rather than criticizing her husband, will search out her own areas for promoting the success of the marriage.

Neither subjection nor leadership reflects a love for the spouse, or the spouse's love for you. Subjection and leadership demonstrate the convert's love for God. This is the issue for us. Jesus said, "If you love *Me*, keep *My* commandments." It is love for God actively demonstrated that should be the driving force of our lives now.

Let me remind you of something David said. It is recorded in Psalm 10: 4. It is just a simple statement, but full of meaning.

Psalm 10:4 The wicked through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.

I think, in a major way, this is what separates the converted from the unconverted. The unconverted also think about God. That is a reality. That is why there are so many religions all over the place. This leads to a conclusion. It is what *pleases* God that counts. Did you get that? It is what pleases God that counts.

Do you remember the voice that spoke from heaven when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist? It said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The unconverted simply do not take the action to please God. That is the difference. The converted will take the actions that please Him, and that is, to be subject to Him. What did Jesus say in John 8: 29? He said, "I always do what pleases Him." "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased."

That statement by Jesus set the standard for how to be successful in this most important matter of life. Our relationship with Him, and our relationship with fellow-man is not a matter of pleasing men. It is a matter of pleasing God through subjection to Him. This, brethren, is living faith. It is that which demonstrates our love for Him.

Now perhaps we can get a handle on understanding this principle if we can reflect on our own desires to please the one that we were attracted to as we were dating before marriage. We really put our best foot forward then for the other.

We are going to look at marriage from another angle. We are going to go to II Thessalonians 2: 8. We will be on the same theme here. This is the chapter that begins with Paul talking about the Beast who is going to arise.

II Thessalonians 2:8-11 And then shall that Wicked be revealed whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.

If you will follow Paul's thoughts here, you will learn whether you are following after God, or Satan. In verses 8 and 9 the apostle is essentially saying that the activity of the "man of sin" and those that follow him, demonstrates that the "unseen to human eyes" hand of Satan is guiding them. Later on when you study your notes, pay attention to that.

Paul especially notes the deceit involved in the life of "the man of sin." Now why does the deceit occur? Because he has no love of the truth. We began this sermon with John 17: 17: "God's

word is truth." Part way through we noted that it is those who are unconverted who have no time for thinking about God in all of their thoughts. They are not tuned into Him so that He matters so much to them that they are looking to Him all the time as to the steps they all should be taking in their lives. The unconverted will not do that.

What is created here in these verses we just read in II Thessalonians 2 is a play on words. Jesus said, "I *am* truth." He personified it. To love truth is to love Christ. Christ is God. To love truth is to love God. But love is something that must be demonstrated in one's life. What we do demonstrates who it is we love. That is an important principle. This is why Jesus said, "If you love *Me*, keep My commandments." That will show Him that we really do love Him.

If we love God, we will demonstrate that by subjecting ourselves to what He instructs us to do. We will put our best foot forward to and for Him, and the result is we will be successfully prepared for leadership in the Kingdom of God. Brethren, it is this very factor which makes the difference between the Philadelphian and the Laodicean. Very simply put, the Laodicean does not have time in his life for pleasing God. His love is lukewarm, distracted, and detached.

Again, I am not saying that demonstrating our love for God is easy. It takes a great deal of faith to do it constantly because we have powerful enemies working against us. I am speaking of Satan, this world, and above all our own self-centered human nature.

We are going to go to I Peter 3: 3-5. This is addressed to women, but the principles here apply to man or woman. It does not matter.

I Peter 3: 3-5 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands.

Peter is trying to put our emphasis in life in the right place. He is focusing on the vanity in us. Some groups, calling themselves Christian, have used this verse 3 to condemn any external ornamentation like jewelry, or whatever. Now for this to be true they would also have to be condemning dresses, because dresses are mentioned in exactly the same verse.

Peter is cautioning all of us not to put our hopes for attracting and, more importantly, holding a husband or a wife on our outward appearance, athletics, money, or anything for that matter. All of those things can change. They can disappear in the blink of an eye. Somebody's beauty can be destroyed in an accident, or their handsomeness destroyed, or their money wiped away.

What we are looking at here is in the grammatical world called an "ellipsis." An ellipsis is a "not-thought" construction. An ellipsis is used by an author to show a relationship between two things that are both true, but the essence of emphasis—the more important—is the second item mentioned. Thus, what Peter is saying is that one should pay attention to outward adorning. Let it take second place to the *inward* beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit.

Ladies, God is not giving you any wiggle room about looking like a slob. The outward adorning is important, but it is not as important as the *inward* adornment. Men, it is the same way with you. The outward adorning has some importance, but it is not as important as the inward adorning. The inward adorning is far more important than external beauty.

There are a couple of good examples in the Bible. A prime example for a woman is personified in Proverbs 31—the "Proverbs 31 woman." She would be an awfully high standard to live up to. For the man it is Jesus Christ, who exemplifies all the qualities we men should have because of His wonderful relationship with the Father.

Here is a very interesting and true quote from another marriage book written by a woman claiming to be a Christian. She shows here a great deal of wisdom. The title of the book is "You Can Be Beautiful." The author is Lottie Beth Hobbs.

"A lovely life must be deliberate; it never happens accidentally. Making the most of ourselves requires a lifetime of constant vigilance and diligence. Pleasing physical traits may be inherited, but true beauty must be acquired. A wise teacher told her class of high school girls, 'You may not be pretty at twenty, but at forty there is no excuse.' Every admirable trait can be developed. We have within us, especially since we have God's spirit, the power to be all that God intended. When we walk in righteousness we appropriate an eternal power, and fulfill an eternal purpose. God gives us His life as a do-it-yourself kit. The rest is up to us."

I have some suggestions for you as we close off this sermon.

Point 1: Whether male or female, accept subjection to God in this matter as your personal responsibility.

I am going to show you something very interesting about a scripture that maybe you think you are familiar with. This is especially appropriate at this time of the year.

II Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith, prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except you be reprobates?

The first thing we need to understand regarding this verse is that the *King James* translation is not as correct as it needs to be. They have translated this verse *objectively* by saying "in the faith." This emphasizes faith as a body of beliefs, and in many cases that would not be wrong, but here it damages the understanding.

Now how do we know this is wrong? First of all, it is the grammar that is used, and also when the thought that Paul wrote here in II Corinthians 13:5 is examined against the backdrop of the whole epistle, what is translated here in the *King James* is not the issue. It should be understood *subjectively* as "We are to examine and test ourselves as to whether we are *living*

by faith." Do you see the difference?

Let me make it even plainer: We are living, trusting Jesus Christ.

Brethren, these people already *knew* the body of beliefs. They were not ignorant. They knew the truth, but were they being faithful to what they already knew? That is the issue. You know the truth. Are you being faithful to it? That is what Paul is charging us to do.

Now how do I know that it should be translated and understood in this manner? Because of a specific naming of Jesus Christ—a person living in us by His spirit—within the same verse. Paul is asking us to examine ourselves as to whether we are being personally faithful and loyal to Jesus Christ.

Let me give you a simple illustration of what is involved here. Reflect back to Genesis again, to Adam and Eve. When they were confronted by Satan, did they know what they were supposed to do? Yes they did. And what did they do? They broke faith with God, and instead gave their loyalty to Satan. That was the issue there. God took it as a personal rejection of Him—their Creator.

We are seeing the issue here very clearly. Let us understand that this is our responsibility. We are to be faithful to Him. He is going to be our Husband. He is courting us. Now let us ask ourselves the question. Are we putting forth our best foot forward to please Him? We know the truth. Are we faithful to it? Are we loyal to it? That is our personal responsibility.

Point 2: Work on developing self-control.

Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

The word "meek" has an interesting application to subjection and to self-control. The Greeks originally used this term to describe a wild horse that had been broken and gentled for the purpose of its rider. This was so that when the rider tugged on the reins for the horse to go to the left, the horse would go to the left, and when the rider tugged on the reins for the horse to go to the right, the horse would go to the right. The horse's spirit and power were not broken, but were placed in harmony with its rider. It still had the power to provide transportation, to give an advantage in war, or to plow the fields, or whatever, depending upon what the rider wanted.

A meek person is the same way. A meek person is one who has himself under control so that he is ever ready to take direction of his master. He still retains power, but it is purposefully, willfully directed as the master desires. What Jesus is saying here in this verse can very easily be understood as: "Blessed (or happy) are the people who take control of their lives and subject themselves to their Lord and Master." They are meek people, and they are going to inherit the earth. They have themselves under control. They are governing themselves in the way that they should.

Christian living is largely accomplished by a person controlling his life according to God's will rather than allowing the circumstances of life to control him. This is something that everyone must do for himself. Trying to control another person's life never works. As long as a person is

being bailed out of his trouble, he never develops, and he is emotionally draining to everybody around him. Generally, these people know what they must do, but they rarely ever do it.

I once heard of a preacher who, every New Year's Eve, got a telephone call from somebody. It was not the same person all the time. The person calling would be all broken up. The person had been examining the past year and did not like what he or she saw in his or her life. The minister would patiently listen to the person. He would offer some advice he felt was in alignment with the scriptures, and then hang up.

Do you know what he found out? The people never overcame. The preacher eventually came to the conclusion that a person who could not control himself to wait until the morning to make the telephone call did not have enough self-control to overcome the problem in the first place.

Point 3: Know surely that though the rewards are great, this is going to require sacrifices. Responsibility demands sacrifices.

Here are some scriptures that will help you.

I Peter 3:13-14 And who is he that will harm you, if you be followers of that which is good? But and if you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.

I Peter 2:18-24 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when you be buffeted for your faults you shall take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judges righteously. Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the cross that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed.

You will find that what we are talking about here is not very frequently going to include public display of sacrifice in behalf of Jesus Christ; rather, in almost every case it is going to require sacrifices *privately*—in the home, while shopping, driving the car, or whatever. It is going to require sacrifices in order to fulfill what God's will is here.

It is very easy to build up certain resentments. I will give you an example. A wife may resent her husband getting to leave the home every day while she, the wife, has to remain at home, feeling trapped. No, ladies, that is not correct. The husband does not *get* to leave the house. He *has* to leave the house. There is a big difference between the two. He has to leave the house if he is going to fulfill his responsibility to provide for his family.

Husbands, as you leave the house, you may resent the wife because she gets to stay at home,

and you have to leave when there are things at home you would far rather do, like working in the garden, prepare the car, paint, or whatever. No, husbands, she *has* to stay at home if she is going to fulfill her obligations to God to take care of her family there. So in this little vignette, sacrifices have to be made even in our thinking about the other person. What is the obligation to God? That is what is important, not how we feel about something. This same principle can be used in many, many different situations.

Let us finish in Hebrews 6:1. Just know for sure that what we are talking about here is going to require sacrifices all along the way.

Hebrews 6:1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ,
let us go on unto perfection.

Paul's charge here could easily be translated: "Let us go on to maturity," or "Let us go on to completion. He is saying that Christians have a responsibility to do something within God's process of creating, and that something is we are required to give ourselves over to His will. This will take us on to perfection. That is His command to us. To human nature, it always seems more convenient to take what seems to be the easy way out—that is, to act or react carnally.

God is creating a family-kingdom. God is creating kings and priests. God is creating leaders in His image. All of these will be accomplished through the easily understood principle of conduct. We must be loyally devoted to Him personally in the faith, always looking beyond the immediate situation, because He has drawn us into His great purpose. It is He who has personally opened the door to opportunities greater than our brains can imagine if we will be faithful despite all of the opposition. Always remember that He is, after all, our Creator, our God, our Savior, our King, and our soon-coming Husband. Learning this lesson is well-worth any temporary cost involved.