

***Let's Show America Great Again***

**SUBMIT TO SUBVERT**

**Ephesians 5:21ff.**

As believers we get worried as we watch the world around us change. The social structures on which our society was built – many of them were rooted in biblical values – are being dismantled and replaced by secular structures. These societal changes don't just contradict what we believe, they threaten our freedom to live what we believe. How are we supposed to respond to these changes and the new structures that are being imposed upon us?

One response is to isolate ourselves from society as much as possible and create our own culture. This approach might let us live what we believe more freely; but we would not be able to fulfil the mission our Lord and Leader gave us.

Political activism is another response. By protesting change and seeking power, some Christians are trying to defend the social structures on which our society was built. Political activism can work well when society shares our worldview. As the dominant view changes, though, it becomes less and less effective.

The people who first read Paul's letter to the Ephesians lived in a world that was a lot more hostile toward the Gospel than ours. Over time, though, they managed to overturn and transform the political and social structures of the Roman Empire. How did they do it? Did they isolate themselves? Did they resort to political activism? No! *They learned to 'walk the way of love'.*

After calling us to walk the way of love ( vv. 1-2), Ephesians 5 spells out some negative behaviours that Christ-like love prevents (vv. 3-20). We looked at those behaviour two weeks ago. Verse 21 then identifies one positive behaviour that Christ-like love compels us to do: *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

The Greek word behind *submit* was a military term that indicated strategic alignment and involved voluntarily assuming responsibility for one another person. Adopting this attitude of Christ-like submission toward Christ, toward each other and toward the people around them is how the early Christians did it.

*These early Christ-followers did not organize special interest groups or political parties. They never directly opposed Caesar; they didn't picket or protest or attempt to overthrow the ruling powers. They didn't publicly denounce or condemn the pagan world. Instead, they challenged the ruling powers by simply being a faithful, alternative presence—obedient to God. Their most distinguishing characteristic was not their ideology or their politics but their love for others.*

<http://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/michael-craven/the-christian-conquest-of-pagan-rome-11640691.html>

In order for the strategy of submission to be effective, it needed to start in the home. That's why the rest of chapter 5 and the first part of chapter 6 describe what it looked like in the Roman household. These verses touch on three relationships that made up a typical Roman household.

- The wife-husband relationship – 5:22-33
- The child-father relationship – 6:1-4
- The slave-master relationship – 6:5-9

While we might see these verses putting household members in their respective places, these verses challenged the tyrannical household structure of Roman society. In the Roman household, the man was absolute lord and owner of everyone under his roof, including his wife. They existed for his pleasure and purpose. He had the power of life and death over them. While they affirm the man's role as the head of his household, these verses really call on men to submit to the members of their households by using their power and position to serve them, just like Christ served the church. By doing so, they turn headship on its head.

For decades now, North American Christians have been protesting change and seeking power in order to defend the social structures on which our society was built. Let's face it, it hasn't worked. We need a new strategy.

Actually, we need a very old one. Ephesians 5:21 reveals the strategy by which the early Christians overturned and transformed their society. Rather than exploiting one another, rather than lording it over one another, they aligned themselves strategically to meet the needs of one another, to serve the best interests of the people in their own households and to minister to the people they met on the streets. May God help us do the same for our country. Amen.