

Lord (Rom 8:38–39).

Therefore, in full accordance with the fact that Paul gives us a command to “be filled in *the realm of the Spirit*,” we see that our becoming more and more separated from the world and unto Messiah is a cooperative work with the Ruach. Together He enables us to fill our lives in that which is pleasing to God and thus brings glory and honor to His great Name.

19 – speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

Tied to the previous verb “be filled,” the present participle “speaking” is the first of a string of present participles which describe resultant activities of believers in Yeshua who “fill their lives up in the realm of the Spirit,” thus maturing in their faith and growing in their ability to serve one another. For as they seek to fill their lives with those things that please the Spirit, the result will be that they will make it a priority to gather together with other believers as the *ekklesia* Yeshua promised to build and will thus seek to encourage one another in the life of faith. In the scheduled meetings of the *ekklesia*, one important component is corporate praise and worship, i.e., giving glory and thanksgiving to God which in turn strengthens and builds the faith of each one who participates from a genuine desire to honor God for all of His goodness.

That “speaking” (λαλοῦντες, *lalountes*), “singing” (ᾄδοντες, *adontes*), and “making melody” (ψάλλοντες, *psallontes*) are all present participles, emphasizes the fact that such activity within the gathered body of Yeshua is the normal, ongoing, characteristic of those who are truly born again and are living members of the body of Messiah, the *ekklesia*.

Note that such corporate worship contains a “horizontal dimension” of worship, for Paul admonishes us to “speak to one another” through the words we sing. As we worship together in song, we affirm to one another God’s infinite greatness, His mighty acts, His full acceptance of us in Yeshua, as well as His presence with us.

The fact that Paul uses the common term “to speak” (λαλέω, *laleō*) rules out the notion held by some that Paul is admonishing the use of “unknown languages or *glossolalia*.” That the whole gathered body is to be edified by “speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” makes it clear that this takes place via normal, clear speech.¹

Can we distinguish between “psalms” (ψαλμός, *psalmos*), “hymns”

1 See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, p. 707.

(ὕμνος, *hymnos*), and “spiritual songs” (ὠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς (ὠδή, *ōdē* + πνευματικός, *pneumatikos*)? Much discussion among the commentators has ensued on this topic, with some taking the view that Paul is simply utilizing three common terms to denote songs sung with words, and perhaps accompanied by musical instruments. As used in the Apostolic Scriptures, the term “psalms” (ψαλμός, *psalmos*) generally denotes the Psalms of the Tanach. The Greek word *psalmos* is used in the Lxx primarily to translate מִזְמוֹר, *mizmor* (42x), נְגִינָה, *n’gînah* (3x), and זִמְרָה, *zimrah* (3x), all of which are found in the titles to the Psalms and which denote music which is sung or played by musical instruments. According to Hoehner,

Originally ψαλμός [*psalmos*] meant “plucking” the string of a bow or the sound of a stringed instrument.¹

Given the fact that Greek *psalmos* is regularly used by the Lxx to translated Hebrew terms of singing or songs, it may well be that stringed instruments regularly accompanied the singing of the Psalms in the Temple. And the fact that Paul uses the term in our text would give strong support to the fact that he is referring to the Psalms of the Tanach.

The Greek word *hymnos*, from which we derive our English word “hymns,” is used seven times to translate *n’gînah* of the Psalms titles (Psalms 6, 55, 61, 67, 76). It is also used in the Gospels to describe the “hymn” sung at the conclusion of the Pesach Seder (Matt 26:30) which in later tradition are the Hallel Psalms, i.e., Ps 113–118. We also find *hymnos* in Acts 16:25 to describe the singing of Paul and Silas as they were imprisoned.

“Spiritual songs” means “songs” characterized as having words and themes which align with the Spirit of God. The word “song” used in this phrase is *ōdē*, from which we derive our English word “ode.” While used of a “dirge” in some Greek literature, it most often “refers to songs of joy or praise or just simply singing.”² The idea that “spiritual songs” are songs given spontaneously by a special work of the Ruach is not supported by the context nor by any other biblical text indicating that the giving of spontaneous songs was a known work of the Spirit. Rather, “spiritual songs” describes songs that fit the realm and work of the Spirit, for the leading verb is “be filled in the realm of the Spirit,” and thus “spiritual songs” are those that would be “in step” with the

1 Hoehner, *Ephesians*, p. 707.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 709.

 Spirit.

Note the parallel text in Col 3:16.

Let the word of Messiah richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Col 3:16)

The emphasis here is that through “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs,” the very “word of Messiah” would dwell among the believers. Thus, it seems very likely that by “spiritual songs” Paul is contrasting the songs sung at frivolous “drinking parties” which were often crude and ungodly, with “spiritual songs” which draw those who participate in them to worship and honor the One Who has saved them. As Calvin notes:

Leave to unbelievers that foolish delight which they take from ludicrous and frivolous jests and witticisms; and let your communications, not merely those that are grave, but those also that are joyful and exhilarating, contain something profitable. In place of their obscene, or at least barely modest and decent, songs, it becomes you to make use of hymns and songs that sound forth God’s praise. Farther, under these three terms he includes all kinds of songs. They are commonly distinguished in this way — that a psalm is that, in the singing of which some musical instrument besides the tongue is made use of: a hymn is properly a song of praise, whether it be sung simply with the voice or otherwise; while an ode contains not merely praises, but exhortations and other matters. He would have the songs of Christians, however, to be spiritual, not made up of frivolities and worthless trifles.¹

... *singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.* – Having emphasized the horizontal dimension of corporate praise, i.e., that we “speak to one another” in order to edify, encourage, and build each other up in our mutual faith, Paul now shows the necessity of a vertical dimension in our times of worship and song, namely, that in our corporate worship we must have a one-to-one, personal worship with God Himself, through His Spirit, in honor of our Savior Yeshua. The beauty of the music itself ought to raise our thanksgiving, our worship, and our full adoration to God by Whose power we live and by Whose

1 Calvin, *Colossians*, p. 217-18.

Spirit we are enabled to walk with Him day by day in the realization of all that He has done, is doing, and has promised to do for us. Surely, the contemplation of His love stirs us to give full honor to Him in our worship.

Once again, when Paul teaches us to make “melody with your heart to the Lord,” he is emphasizing that this is something we do in the realm of knowing and affirming the truth, for to make melody “with your heart” means to do so with one’s mind, for in the Hebraic perspective, the heart is the seat of the intellect, not the place from which emotions flow. Thus, the songs we sing in worship of our God must have words that speak the truth, i.e., which fully align with the truth He has revealed to us in the Scriptures, the very truths we affirm as the foundation of our faith.

20–21 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Yeshua Messiah to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Messiah.

We have seen three participles in the previous verse which are attached to the verbal command of v. 18, namely: “be filled *in the realm* of the Spirit”... speaking to one another ... singing ... and making melody.” Now in our current verses we are given two more present participles, both which speak to life in the realm of the Spirit: “giving thanks” and “being subject to one another.”

Once again, both of these participles are in the present tense, and thus with the previous three, denote that which should be the regular, ongoing characteristic of believers who are constantly filling their lives up with the things which please the Ruach HaKodesh.

always giving thanks for all things – The NASB has added the word “always” in order to properly translate the present participle εὐχαριστοῦντες (*eucharistountes*) which thus denotes something that is on-going. Once again, Paul calls us to the giving of thanks, as he did earlier in v. 4 where the “giving of thanks” is contrasted with “filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting,” which are characteristic of unbelievers.

As we seek to fill our lives up in those things which please the Ruach HaKodesh, we will learn to “give thanks” at all times (πάντοτε, *pan-tote*) and “for all things,” which means that there is never a time in which we should fail to give thanks to God. This is so because God does all things well and all that He does is good:

You are good and do good; Teach me Your statutes. (Ps 119:68)

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Rom 8:28)

And we are enabled to give thanks at all times and in all circumstances for we have been born again through the living Spirit of God because of the work that has been accomplished for us by Yeshua Himself. Thus, our giving of thanks is “in the name of our Lord Yeshua Messiah.” He is our Lord, He is our Messiah, and He is our Savior, as His Name Yeshua bears witness.

Further, it is through the mediatorial work of Yeshua that we are able to have full access to the Father, for having paid the penalty of our sin and risen as the conqueror of sin and death, He ascended to the right hand of the Father, there to intercede on our behalf. Thus through Him we are welcomed at the “throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). Note the parallel text in Colossians.

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Yeshua, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. (Col 1:17)

If this is the pattern of life as we grow and mature in our faith, then surely

A life filled with such thanksgiving will find spontaneous expression in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.¹

...and be subject to one another in the fear of Messiah. – Here Paul uses, once again, a present participle which denotes what ought to be a regular and common characteristic of those who live their lives in the realm of the Spirit. The fact that Paul once again uses a participle might be better reflected by translating the phrase, *being subject to one another in the fear of the Messiah*. Even as we are to speak to one another, sing and make melody together, express our praise and thanksgiving to God as we gather together, so we are to submit to one another. Once again, one of the primary marks of maturing faith in Yeshua is that we would evidence a mutual submission to each other as we fellowship in the body of Messiah.

Clearly, even as Yeshua is the greatest example of submission as He

1 F. F. Bruce, *Ephesians*, p. 381.

submitted to the Father, came in human flesh, and was willing even to submit Himself to the death-blows of sinful mankind in obedience to His Father (Phil 2:3–8), so we are to walk in His footsteps and consider others as more important than ourselves as we fellowship within the body of Messiah.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; (Phil 2:3)

This call to mutual submission in the sense of looking out for the good of others, helping one another, and not being self-assertive, nor each one insisting that they get their own way, is an essential and needed element if a local assembly is to succeed in giving forth a true witness of Messiah.

Paul knew by experience what would happen in a church when this rule is disobeyed (1 Cor. 1:11, 12; 3:1–9; 11:17–22; 14:26–33). He therefore stresses the fact that “out of reverence for Christ,” that is, with a conscious regard for his clearly revealed will, every member of the body should be willing to recognize the rights, needs, and wishes of the others. Thus believers will be able to present a united front to the world, the blessing of true Christian fellowship will be promoted, and God in Christ will be glorified.¹

Having set forth the need for mutual submission to one another within the body of Messiah, Paul has laid the ground work for the more specific aspects of submission characteristic of Yeshua’s followers within the household, as the next verses teach us.

22-24 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Messiah also is the head of the *ekklesia*, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the *ekklesia* is subject to Messiah, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

It may be that vv. 22–24 represent a chiasm, and if so, may help us glean some of Paul’s primary emphases in these verses. A “chiasm” is

¹ Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, p. 244.

a literary structure in which lines parallel each other with the center or middle lines giving a primary emphasis that must be heeded if the exhortation or thrust of the text is to be properly understood and implemented.

Here is the chiasm in Greek and then English.

A αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν

B ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ

C ὅτι ἀνὴρ ἐστὶν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς

C¹ ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, αὐτὸς σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος

B¹ ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ

A¹ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντί.

A Wives, be subject to your own husbands

B as to the Lord

C For the husband is the head of the wife

C¹ as also the Messiah is head of the *ekklesia* (He is the Savior of the body)

B¹ As the *ekklesia* is subject to Messiah,

A¹ so the wives *ought to be* to their husbands, in all things.

The emphasis of a chiastic layout, which we have here, is upon the central lines (C and C¹), and in our text these give the primary foundation or platform upon which the entire exhortation to the wives is given. Put simply, the “husband is the head of the wife *in the same way* (ὡς, *hōs*) or by the same means by which Yeshua is the head of the *ekklesia*. But by what means is Yeshua placed as the “head of the *ekklesia*”? It is because “He Himself is the Savior of the body.” In other words, it was by His willingness to become the redemptive sacrifice for His people that He is established as the head of the body. Thus, the point Paul is making in using this chiastic arrangement is that it is by the self-giving of the husband to secure the needs and happiness of his wife that will enable her to submit to his leadership in joy and faithfulness. The husband is also in a posture of submission, for having Yeshua as the model to follow, the husband submits himself to make sure the needs of his wife are being met, and thus he puts her needs above his own. There is, therefore, in the marriage arrangement as God has ordained it, a mutual submission: the husband submits himself to fulfill the needs of his wife, and the wife submits herself to the leadership of her husband. When both are submitting to the Lord and thereby seek to fulfill their roles within the marriage as God has ordained, their mutual submission to each

other brings about true joy, happiness, and success in their marriage bond.

This does not mean that a wife no longer needs to submit to a disobedient husband, but what it does emphasize is that the obedience of the husband to give himself for the good of his wife is the path which will aid her in submitting to his leadership, making it a joy rather than a drudgery.

Note these other texts of the Apostolic Scriptures which admonish wives to be in submission to their husbands:

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.
(Col 3:18)

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, (1Pet. 3:1)

For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; (1Pet. 3:5)

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. – The Greek word translated “be subject to” is *ὑποτάσσω* (*hupotassō*) made up of the preposition *hupo*, “under” and the verb *tassō*, “to put in order.” Submission is the willingness to follow a prescribed order, in which one puts oneself under the leadership of another person and willingly follows. This is what God expects of a wife, that she willingly follows the leadership of her husband.

This does not mean, of course, that God expects a wife to remain in submission to an abusive husband, or to simply accept an ungodly or immoral environment which a husband may create out of his own waywardness. In such situations it is required of a wife that she speak up, and let her husband know that such behavior is unacceptable, and that it will not be tolerated. But barring these exceptional situations, the role of the Godly wife is one of submission to her husband.

It is often overlooked that nowhere in the Apostolic Scriptures is there even a hint that it is the duty of a husband to make his wife submit to him. In all of the places where the wife is admonished to submit to her husband, the admonition is directly to her, and there is nothing in the Scriptures directed toward husbands that they should subdue

their wife to submit to them. This is important because it emphasizes that submission is the function of the wife's will, not something into which she is forced or coerced. Indeed, forced submission (we might better call it subjugation) is not true submission at all. Compliance while grinding teeth and constantly complaining is also not submission. What the Scriptures enjoin upon the wife is a willing submission to her husband because she knows that this is what God wants, and she trusts that He will bless her and her family as she follows His will.

In our text, the wife's submission to her husband is the result of her "filling up her life with those things that please the Ruach," that is, she has a life that is filled with the things of the Spirit. She submits "as to the Lord" (ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ), that is, she submits to her husband because she lives a life of faith in submission to the Lord Himself. She wants to do His will, that is, to live as the Spirit leads her, and His leading is always in full accord with the will of the Father and the Son, Yeshua.

Note that Paul adds "to your own husband," which at first might seem superfluous. But the point is important: the marriage bond makes it clear that a wife does not have the same obligation of submission to other men, for the marriage bond uniquely binds a husband and wife as one in the sight of God (Gen 2:24; cf. Matt 19:5).

For the husband is the head of the wife, as Messiah also is the head of the ekklesia, He Himself being the Savior of the body. – Here we have a second strong motivation for the wife to be in submission to her husband, for, as Paul makes clear in v. 32, the manner in which husbands and wives live out the will of the Spirit in their marriage together is primarily to be a picture of Messiah and the *ekklesia*.

Thus, as the husband puts the needs of his wife ahead of his own needs, and as the wife submits to the leadership of her husband as her head, the picture of Messiah as head of the *ekklesia* is modeled, and thus He is glorified. Even as Yeshua is the Savior of the body by having given His life for the *ekklesia*, so the husband who gives himself in order to meet the needs of his wife is, in that limited sense, portraying the very work of Yeshua.

But as the ekklesia is subject to Messiah, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. – Paul again reiterates the primary grounds upon which his inspired words have genuine cogency, and it is that the marriage arrangement created and granted by God Himself was, from the beginning, to be a picture of the relationship of Yeshua to His redeemed people, the *ekklesia*. When the life of a wife is fully given over to the Spirit so that she is both desirous and able to following His leading, she will be motivated to submit to her husband knowing that such a life

of willing submission will not only enhance their marriage and bring joy and contentment in true companionship, but will also glorify her Savior Yeshua, for in her submitting to the leadership of her husband, she will be modeling the very thing that characterizes the true *ekklesia* which Yeshua Himself purchased with His own blood.