

“Submitting to One Another in the Fear of God.” - Eph. 5:21 (NKJV)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. *One very common error misleads the opinion of mankind-that authority is pleasant and submission painful. In the general course of human affairs the very reverse of this is nearer the truth. Command is anxiety; obedience is ease. –Paley*
- B. How can we achieve the kind of humility that would bring us God’s grace while avoiding the anxiety attached to holding authority? Through submission.
- C. *Strong’s Greek Dictionary* defines submission: to subordinate; reflexively, to obey: --be under obedience (obedient), put under, subdue unto, ...submit self unto. (*hupotasso*)
- D. The Bible clearly teaches that we are obligated to submit to:
 - 1. Earthly Authorities (1 Pet. 2:18-21)
 - 2. Masters (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-4:1)
 - 3. Parents (Eph. 6:1-4; Col. 3:20,21)
 - 4. Husbands (Eph. 5:22,23; Col. 3:18,19; 1 Pet. 3:1-7)

[It will be impossible to submit properly to kings, masters, parents or husbands unless we learn first to submit to God and second to submit to one another.]

- 5. God (Rom. 6:13)
And if we obey God, we must disobey ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists. --Herman Melville
- 6. One Another (Eph. 5:21)

II. DISCUSSION

- A. If there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female in Christ (Gal. 3:28), then what subordination is called for among Christians whom Paul says are his equal? Paul and Peter address this seeming contradiction with such phrases as already suggested, namely wives submit to husbands, slaves submit to masters, children obey parents, citizens to governments, etc.
- B. We will see that it is this willingness to submit to one another in the Lord, which causes Christians to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).
 - 1. **Mutual submission** - Eph. 5:21 - *submitting to one another in the fear of God.* (NKJV) or *Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.* (RSV)
 - a. Consider others better than ourselves.
 - b. Looking out for their interests first (Phil. 2:3-4)

- c. Whatever role we have been given provides us an opportunity to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ. (Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary*, p. 930.)
- 2. **Mutual responsibilities** – The passages that we have referred to shows God's plan for how we are to interact with one another involves a level playing field.
 - a. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord, but parents are not to provoke their children.
 - b. The slave is to serve with no reservations, but the masters are to treat their slaves with consideration, concern, and total fairness.
 - c. Wives are indeed in subjection to their husbands but husbands are commanded to love their wives as Christ loves the church.
 - d. No matter which role we find ourselves in as Christians, we are to be guided by a deep abiding concern for others.
- 3. **Occasion to serve** - Any Christian relationship that relies on authority and submission (such as the ones already suggested) are not to be viewed as humiliating, but instead as opportunities to serve one another. Example: The master serves his slaves by treating them with fairness and respect, while the slave serves the master loyally.
 - a. This is not the world's view of authority and submission. In the world authority is exalted and servitude is debased. A person's position determines their value.
 - b. Christ rejects this worldly pattern in His church. A person's value exists apart from his role. Example: The slave, the wife, the child and the citizen are as equally important to God as the master, the husband, the parent, and the king under Christ's scheme.

III. CONCLUSION

- A. *"God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."* (James 4:6) This is the very lesson our Lord was continually trying to teach the disciples while here on earth. (John 13:1-10)
- B. Some governmental figures portray themselves as "servants of the public" and so they should be. Many police departments use the motto, "To protect and serve," and what a good motto it is. The Lake County School Board's aim "is it for the good of the children?" and that is a noble aim. Unfortunately, these mottos are often times just "ear candy" and are not backed up with action.
- C. Christ expects more than words from His followers, he expects action - **action from everyone on everyone else's behalf**. If the Lord Himself is our servant-master, then we must prepare ourselves to be servant-leaders, servant-mothers, servant-children, servant-husbands, servant-employers, and servant-employees, etc.

[Discussion points adapted from Lawrence Richard's, *The Teacher's Commentary*, pp. 929,930.]