

Series: Ephesians
Title: Submitting One to Another
Text: Ephesians 5: 21
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In all our relations in life, the Lord Jesus teaches his people to be tender where we have the rule over others and submissive toward others who have the rule over us. When God calls us to life and faith in Christ, rather than abolish the responsibilities we have in our relations to one another, Christ gives them godly meaning and godly order. In the relations where we are the authority, Christ teaches us how to rule well and the significance of that rule. In our relations where we are to submit, Christ teaches us how to submit well and gives each yoke its proper significance.

We begin today with Christ giving us the general command for us to submit ourselves to one another. In context, it includes to all who have authority over us.--Ephesians 5: 21: Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

IN THE FEAR OF GOD

Notice, how and why we are to submit—"in the fear of God", "the fear of Christ." "The fear of God" includes faith in Christ, submission to Christ, dependence upon Christ, the love of Christ, humbleness of mind because of Christ, as well as a healthy fear of God our Savior, along with reverence and awe of God our Savior.

We are not born with the fear of God the first time we are born—the brazen audacity and pride of sinners to commit transgression before God teaches us that. "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, *that there is no fear of God before his eyes.*" (Ps 36: 1)

Unregenerate sinners are not afraid to lie before God. Rather than submit in confession of our sins, sinners lie—lie to God who has the rule over them; not afraid to lie to men who God gives to rule over them; not afraid even to lie to themselves, "Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips." (Rom 3: 13)

Unregenerate sinners are not afraid to curse before God—curse God's name, curse fellow man, curse all authority, "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." (Rom 3: 14)

Unregenerate sinners are not afraid to shed the blood of their enemies: in heart, with the tongue, even with the hand, "Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known." (Rom 3: 15-17)

Why? What does all this tell us about a sinner? "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Rom 3: 18) The reason men naturally hate authority—pastors, husbands, fathers, employers, police, civil rulers—is because they hate God's authority. They do not fear God. You can learn the doctrine of grace but still not have the fear of God in your heart, the same as you can learn the doctrines of works and not have the fear of God in your heart.

A natural sinner has no fear of God's presence—especially not where God's word is preached. In our day, preachers speak so flippantly from the pulpit. Men and women show utter disdain for God in the ways they come before God within the Lord's house, amongst his people. Do you know what the apostle Paul meant when he said to the Corinthians, "And I was with you...in fear, and in much trembling." (1 Cor 2: 3) It was

not a fear of public speaking; it was the fear of God! It is a fearful thing to come into God's presence, to hear God speak or to speak for God.

Ecclesiastes 5: 1: Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. 2: Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

Natural man has no fear of offending God: no fear of speaking a lie against God and his Christ, no fear of the terror of God's justice, holiness and power, and no reverence and awe of God's glory and majesty in the face of Christ Jesus! Natural man does not tremble to approach God, except rarely when he thinks he is about to die and meet God. But the believer—born of the Spirit of God—does!

Believers do not have a stiff-necked, rebellious spirit but a broken and contrite heart. Why?—because the fear of God is in our heart. Be sure to understand: this is not a legal fear. The Son of God, Christ Jesus, has delivered every elect child of God from that kind of fear.

Galatians 3: 13: Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:

When Christ is formed in the heart he casts that fear out.

1 John 4:18: There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

Romans 8: 15: For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16: The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

Romans 6: 14: For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Galatians 5: 18: But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Romans 6: 15: What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Instead, of grace making the child of God throw off the yoke of all rule and authority, as we behold Christ on the cross who put away our sin and shame, who put an end to our curse and condemnation, who ransomed us from the law and its rigorous demands, who made satisfaction to God in behalf of all God's elect, having Christ in our hearts, we have the fear, reverence, awe and love of Christ toward God in our hearts. The Spirit of Christ puts true fear in our hearts, constraining us, to submit and follow Christ's rule in all things! This fear is a healthy fear—respect and awe and reverence—for God's holiness, wisdom, justice, grace and power—reverence because of his glory which we behold in the face of Christ Jesus.

KNOWING WHEN AND WHEN NOT TO SUBMIT

Also, this is important: If those in authority over us would have a believer to do anything that is not in the fear of God, then we are under no obligation to submit. Whatsoever is not honoring to God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, whatsoever is not true or for the truth, whatsoever is not for the glory of God, whatsoever is not for the good of his saints, believers are under no obligation to submit.

Understand, those in authority may be in error or mistaken. As long as it does not take us from the gospel, from serving God in truth, we should submit. We should trust God to overrule their mistake. But if they would put something between us and Christ we are not under obligation to submit.

Concerning the men who came down from Jerusalem, who commanded Gentiles believers must be circumcised or they could not be saved, Paul said, “To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” (Gal 2: 5)

The key to submission to those in authority over us is this: in the fear of God. Notice how all of these various relations are to show reverence in the fear of God: Eph 5: 22—wives...as unto the Lord; Eph 5: 25—husbands...even as Christ loved the church; Eph 6: 1—children...in the Lord; Eph 6: 5—fathers...in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; Eph 6: 5—servants—as unto Christ; Eph 6: 9—masters—knowing your Master is in heaven. We are to submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God, not proud, but lowly in heart toward each other.

SUBMITTING TO THE HIGHER POWERS

Believers are to submit to all who are in authority—in power in offices higher than us and over us. In Romans 13, Christ commands his child through the apostle Paul, to be in subjection to the all those in positions over us, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.” (Rom 13: 1)

This includes every higher power, every person in office, who is over us. For instance: wives submit to husbands in the Lord, children submit to father and mother in the Lord, the church submits to Christ’s under-shepherds (his pastors and deacons) in the Lord, employee’s submit to their employers in the Lord, citizens submit to the civil rulers (police, mayors, governors, president) in the Lord.

NO POWER BUT GOD

The reason we submit is because God is the only Power and he ordains these offices and put men where he will, “For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” (Rom 13: 1) There is no power but of God. Who does the kingdom and the power and the glory belong to? Christ said of God, “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.” (Mt 6: 13)

Revelation 1:5: And...Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.

Revelation 17: 14: These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful.

Sometimes, we see one of our presidents lead us in a direction we know is not right. Do we rebel? Do we protest in the streets? No. Why? We believe the word of our God, “The king’s heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *as* the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.” (Pr 21:1) What great, great comfort! We trust God is ultimately the one in control. God said, “By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. 16: By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.” (Pro 8: 15)

Brethren, think about is: who chose Christ to be King? Who chose his people, over whom Christ would reign in salvation? God the Father did. It was a good choice was it not? Consider how Christ accomplished the victory over Satan, sin death and hell! It was not robbery for God the Son to declare himself equal with God—he is God, equal with God the Father and Spirit in power and in all things.

Yet, by God the Father's wise decree, God the Son came to this earth, took flesh like his brethren, took the form of a servant, submitted to God's power, and obeyed unto the death of the cross. By his submission, he highly exalted God and all his people highly exalted God in him. He obtained eternal redemption for each sinner for whom he died. As the servant of God, Christ won the victory through the submission and obedience of faith to God.

Therefore, now, by God, Christ our King reigns, rules and decrees justice as our Head, our Savior, our Righteousness, our All! God knows best doesn't he? Therefore, he tells us to now submit ourselves to Christ in the fear of God! And to do so by submitting to those Christ puts in power in the fear of God and to one another in the fear of Christ.

AN EXAMPLE IN HISTORY

Knowing history, you know nations that were once in power, loose power; another nation becomes the major power. Long ago, there came a point in history, when all nations lost power and came under the rule of Babylon, including Israel and Judah. God sent Jeremiah with a literal yoke on his neck and a word in his mouth to tell the world that it was God doing it. That is what Christ our King is telling us to declare to the world by wearing this spiritual yoke in submission to Christ and in submission to those he has put in power. Read this and see that it is God our Savior, Christ our King, who is ruling all kings and nations and beasts in this earth.

Jeremiah 27: 2: Thus saith the LORD to me; Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck, 3: And send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah; 4: And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters; 5: I have made the earth, the man and the beast that *are* upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. 6: And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. 7: And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. 8: And it shall come to pass, *that* the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand. 9: Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: 10: For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish. [Notice in v15 God said of the false prophets, "I have not sent them."] 11: But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the LORD; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.

Brethren, by submitting to King Jesus in faith, God shall not destroy us but let us dwell in his land forever. God is absolutely sovereign—especially in salvation. We declare it to men, by being in submission to the higher powers and by walking humbly toward one another. We declare, "he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what *is* in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him." (Dan 2: 21-22) When they behold us not worrying, complaining and protesting like the men of this world, we say to all, Christ is King and "there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."

RESIST THE POWER, RESIST GOD

Since there is no power, no order, no law but of God, therefore, if we resist the powers that be, if we resist the laws of the land, we resist the order and command of God, “Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.” (Rom 13: 2)

We will see as we go on in Ephesians and other places in scripture, we either obey or disobey “as unto the Lord.” It does not mean it is “as if” we do it unto God. It means when we resist the authority and order God ordained we are resisting God and the ordinance of God.

GOD’S CHILD CORRECTED

God shall see to it that his child is corrected, “and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.” (Rom 13: 2)

One, we shall receive temporal punishment by the hand of the officer himself. It is his just duty to do so.

Two, the first cause is God. The child of God shall receive chastening at the hand of God. Or if they be rebels, God has even destroyed those who oppose his ministers. For example Korah, Dathan, and Abiram opposed Moses (Nu 26:9) and were swallowed up alive in the earth. (Nu 26:10)

Three, if we meet God without Christ we shall receive eternal punishment. Jude says to whom "the blackness of darkness is reserved for ever," (Jude 1:13) It is because they "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities," particularly of God and his Christ. (Jude 1:8)

GOOD WORKERS AND EVIL WORKERS

If we do not want to be called out and chastened then simply obey, “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good.” (Rom 13: 3)

First and foremost, turn from your obstinacy and believe on Christ our King and our Savior. He is not a terror to those who repent and believe on him. Only to those who rebel! Wilt thou then not be afraid of THE POWER! Do that which is good, believe on Christ today! The same goes for powers in this earth. It is only when we are disobedient that we should fear judgment.

GOOD MINISTERED UNTO US

In submission to God, to Christ our God and Savior, to those he places in authority, to one another, we always find good being ministered unto us, “do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” (Rom 13: 3-4)

All heart-obedience is by the grace and power of God. God receives all the glory for any obedience in his child—all glory! By the same power, when we receive good or praise from those Christ has put in power, it is of God, “he is the minister of God to thee for good.”

Begin with Christ. When God gives us life and faith and draws us to rest in Christ, Christ is the minister of God to thee for good. Sinner, Christ only gives us that which is good: righteousness, free justification, holiness, redemption, reconciliation to God, preservation, growth in grace, his eternal inheritance—Christ only gives that which is good! Why will you stubbornly, rebel against Christ the Power and Wisdom of God?

Why will you go through life in terror? Christ is the just Judge. He will certainly give the faithless rebel his just due! “If thou do that which is evil”—refuse to submit to Christ—“be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” But submit to Christ and all things are yours! “do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good.’

Likewise, it is true of us in regards to the various offices in the earth which God has ordained for us to submit unto. When we receive good who should we praise? Only God. He gave us grace to obey. But when we receive evil who should we blame? Only ourselves.

But don't blame the powers that be for doing their job in punishing us. Remember who is first in chastening us? Who writes the ticket? The police officer might write it, the judge might pass the sentence, but if it is the just reward of our disobedience, “he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”

THE ALL-IMPORTANT REASON WE MUST SUBMIT

Lastly, what is the all-important reason we must submit ourselves one to another? “Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.” (Rom 13: 5)

Notice, we “must needs be subject.” God says this is not an option. We must needs be in subjection to Christ. Likewise, we must needs be in subjection to the higher powers and one another.

Why is this so important, especially to you and I who have been chosen, redeemed and regenerated by our God? We will receive what is just. God is just. Those he saves he saves in perfect accordance with his justice. Christ satisfied justice, declaring God just. God is our Justifier because he spared not his only begotten Son. The mercy God gives each individual child he saves is just-mercy! He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. So ye we must needs be in subjection for the sake of justice and mercy. Disobey and we will receive wrath from our superiors.

But we must submit not only for “wraths' sake”, not only to prevent receive that which is just in punishment, but also because our “conscience” bears witness, that God has taught us that it is God himself who is the Power.

For example, some earthly power says do this or that—earthly husband, father, police officer, pastor, judge. It may or may not seem to you all that significant. But it is not the greatness or the insignificance of the ordinance that makes our submission a must. It is the fact they are the minister of God to us that makes our submission a must. We must needs be in submission to God.

Is anything Christ says to you and me an insignificant thing? If we see what he has done for us, everything he commands will be significant. Well, his command to us as his redeemed saints is, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” (Eph 5: 21)

Lord willing, next time, we will begin looking one at a time at each individual relationship: wives to husbands; husbands to wives; children to parents; fathers to children; employees to employers; employers to employees. Try not to miss one of these messages. We will seek to see Christ in each case. He will make these relationships sweeter to the believer.

Amen!