



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Obey? Submit? What'chu Talkin' 'Bout! (Eph 5:22-33)

22 MARCH 2011

Ron J. Bigalke, PhD / PO Box 244, Rincon, GA 31326-0244 / www.capitolcom.org / ron.bigalke@capitolcom.org

BIBLE STUDY

Ephesians

Location:

122 CAP

Time:

TUESDAYS @ 7:15 AM

EPHESIANS 5:22-33

“Obey? Submit? What'chu Talkin' 'Bout!”

Introduction

The primary theme for Ephesians is “to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1—2 emphasize that Christians are made alive “together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).” Ephesians 3—4 emphasize that Christ dwells within the believer “through faith.” Ephesians 5 demonstrates how the control of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life is applied to relationships within the home and professional environments. Being filled with the Holy Spirit produces joy in the life of the believer and affects how that individual relates to his/her spouse and children, and in the work environment. Ephesians 6 provides a few instructions with regard to labor and management, and concludes by considering spiritual conflict in the believer’s life.

Genesis 2—3 reveal the foundational components for marriage and family life. Marriage results in a new social unit being established, with the purpose being to form a new life of two people as “one flesh,” through intimacy and unity. The family was the first institution that God established, and remains foundational to society ever since its inception. With the entrance of sin into this happy relationship, the happiness of the first couple was affected. God, therefore, established an order to this relationship. The instructions for family relationships are provided in Ephesians 5—6 to guide family members in their relationships with one another.

SUBMISSIVE RESPECT AND LOVING LEADERSHIP

The Greek word translated “submitting” (KJV), “be subject” (NASB), and “submit” (NIV) in verse 21 is *hupotassō* (ὑποτάσσω). The basic meaning of the word is “to place under,” “to submit,” or “to subordinate.” Inferiority is

contrary to the meaning of *hupotassō*. Submission is a word that modern society regards with unpleasantness. Although it is not an easy word to discuss, submission is not a detestable word. To develop submission into the structure of both the home and society is essential.

Both the husband and the wife are created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). Scripture instructs the wife to be in submission to her husband, and the husband to be in submission to Christ. The reason for this submission is to reflect the relationship between the Father and the Son within the Godhead. Christ Jesus is in submission to God the Father, but He is not in any manner inferior. Therefore, it is a biblical and logical absurdity to deduce that the wife is inferior because she is in submission to her husband. Submission is not based upon ability, intelligence, worth, or any other quality; it is the foundation for a structure that God has established, in which He has even placed Himself. Christ Jesus is in submission to the Father.

SUBMISSION IS NOT BASED UPON ABILITY, INTELLIGENCE, WORTH, OR ANY OTHER QUALITY; IT IS THE FOUNDATION FOR A STRUCTURE THAT GOD HAS ESTABLISHED, IN WHICH HE HAS EVEN PLACED HIMSELF.

(5:22-24) The first concept mentioned in the marriage relationship is the wife’s submission to her husband. The significance of this statement is best understood with a consideration of the time in which it was written. In the time of the New Testament, wives had few freedoms; however, there were new liberties in Christ and in life, when they became Christians. Nevertheless, those new liberties did not mean that wives were no longer to be subject to their husband’s leadership (“but as the church is subject to Christ”).

The biblical injunction for a wife to demonstrate submission to her husband is an attitude of heart toward him. The heart attitude is not characterized by hardship, inferiority, or resignation; rather, it is an act of the will whereby the wife is subject to her husband’s leadership. Both leadership and submission are not with regard to inferiority or superiority; rather, these actions are the consequence of accountability and responsibility to the Lord.

Wives submit “as to the Lord,” which means that she serves the Lord by submitting to her husband. As a consequence of

an imperfect and sinful world, however, there are circumstances in which a wife could not submit to her husband. For instance, 2 Peter 2:13-17 communicates the responsibility to obey government. However, in Acts 5:29, the civil authorities commanded Peter to cease from proclaiming the gospel. Peter replied, “We must obey God rather than men.” Obedience to government is commanded unless doing so would result in disobedience to God. Obedience to God always supersedes any human authority.

If one were not to obey government when doing so would cause sin against God (i.e. civil disobedience), then it is consistent that wives are to obey their husbands if doing so would be sin against God. If a husband demands something immoral or anything that would violate the will of God, the wife is not obligated. Moreover, submission does not mean unquestioned acceptance of all a husband’s actions. First Peter 3:1-7 describes several submissive characteristics: “chaste and respectful behavior;” gentleness and peacefulness; obedience (unless it would result in sin); and, a spiritual perspective.

(5:25-30) Husbands are also given a criterion. They are to love their wives even as Christ loved the church. The command is not possible by mere human ability but necessitates the filling of the Holy Spirit. The husband is to regard his wife as primary in his life, which means that he must care and plan for her with her best interests as his ambition.

He must love his wife as his own body. Although the husband lives in an imperfect body, he “nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church” (5:29). Even though his wife may be imperfect, the husband is to love her as he already loves himself. “He who loves his own wife loves himself” (5:28) because they have entered a relationship as “one flesh” (i.e. one person).

THE COMMAND IS NOT POSSIBLE BY MERE HUMAN ABILITY BUT NECESSITATES THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The notion that “they lived happily ever after” is only true for marriage in fairy tales. An actual marriage will only be successful when there is sacrificial giving and teamwork applied to it. The constant variety in the life of each spouse necessitates a commitment by both the husband and the wife to have a vibrant relationship. Marriage is a complementary union between two members—male and female—both of who have a special responsibility. Marriage is not a competition between spouses; rather, the God ordained roles for the husband and the wife were created to interconnect and to maintain order in the relationship.

(5:31-33) The home is to demonstrate the relationship between Christ and the church. Submission, therefore, is based upon position and not personal preference; it is an act of obedience to God and can be obeyed only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Sacrifice and trust are two essential components for the husband and wife relationship to be as God intended.

Ephesians 5:22—6:9 demonstrates the application of the gospel into three basic societal relationships: (1) home life; (2) family life; and, (3) professional life. The home life is addressed first because healthy marriages are essential not only to the church but also to general society. Ephesians 5 concludes with the statement that Christ is the foundation for a healthy marriage. Indeed, marriage expresses a mystery that is great: Christ and the church

... CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION FOR A HEALTHY MARRIAGE.

The “mystery” has already been explained (viz. that all things will be brought into complete submission to the Messiah-King). Christ Jesus has entirely defeated the powers of darkness, raised the spiritually dead, and brought reconciliation to believing Jews and Gentiles. It is through these dynamics that the “mystery” has already been revealed (although the ultimate manifestation at the second coming is still future). There is, however, another dynamic in which the “mystery” is made known in the present time, which is the lives of husbands and wives who demonstrate the relationship between Christ and the church. The “mystery” of Christ and the church is the context for understanding how a truly healthy marriage relationship can be experienced.

Two rivers may flow smoothly prior to merging; however, when they flow together, the rivers are often tumultuous. Each river has a current of its own that collides with the other. As the rivers flow downstream, the collision of currents subsides, and a new river emerges that is broader, deeper, and more powerful. The same is true of healthy marriages. When the husband and the wife imitate God, they bless their lives with godly unity. As husbands and wives deepen their relationship with God, so do they become closer to one another.

ABOUT CAPITOL COMMISSION

Capitol Commission state directors are pastors/missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come. With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God’s great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you. The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and to pray for their eternal salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.