

Recall, Christians are commanded to submit to one another in love. Husbands are called to lead and exercise authority over their wives. Wives are called to submit to their husband's headship. This marriage relationship is grounded in selfless love and models Christ and his church. Today, we will examine the two remaining examples which enable us to understand God's established roles of authority and submission that he has ordered and designed as part of creation.

Read Ephesians 6:1-9

Eph 6:1-4 - Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

1. Children are commanded to submit to the authority of their parents.

- a. How should children honour their parents and why (cf. Col 3:20)? This is the first commandment taught to children which holds a promise from God. What is this promise (cf. Ex 20:12, Deut 5:16)?

- b. Parents are to nurture their children in the Lord and not embitter them. How are parents to bring the children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (cf. Pro 22:6, Deut 6:4-9)?

Eph 6:5-9 - Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

2. The submission Christians are called to is further illustrated between bondservants submitting to the authority of their masters (context; slaves were an integral part of the society). This is a commandment from the Lord.

- a. How should a faithful bondservant act? Should the promise of a reward fuel a Christian to be faithful?

- b. Paul makes it clear to the masters that the very same principles apply to them as well (v9). For the masters, they are to do well to those in submission to them and not to take advantage of them by exercising their authority unjustly. Why does Paul make this case (cf. 2 Chron 19:7)?

3. The principles of submission outlined have parallels in to our own day between parents/children and bondservants/slaves; witnessed in relationships between employees/employers and students/teachers. How can you practically serve God faithfully in your season of life today in light of the text?

Paul has spoken of the greatness of the purpose of God in Christ, the glory of his high calling (Eph 1-3) and the life that should follow it (Eph 4-6). The standards have been set; the standards for personal life, for life in the fellowship of the Christian community and in and outside of the Christian home. Paul now starts his conclusion reminding the readers in light of these great truths, Christians are at war and provides instructions on how to stand firm.

Eph 6:10-12 - Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

4. In these last days, the true believer described in Eph 1-3, who lives the Spirit-controlled life of 4:1-6:9, can be sure to find himself or herself in a spiritual war.

- a. Define "spiritual warfare".
- b. The different terms used for the authorities, cosmic powers and spiritual forces all point to the same reality; they are all supernatural beings whose essential characters like the devil are wicked and evil. What are some ways these entities exert their influence and power in the world (cf. Eph 2:1-3; 1 Thes 2:18, 2 Cor 11:13-15)?
- c. Although they are powerful, why should the believer not fear (cf. Eph 1:19-22; Eph 1:3, 2:4-6)?

5. What does it mean to be strong and in the strength of the Lord (cf. 2 Tim 2:1-13)? How do we stand firm against the schemes of the devil (cf. 1 Peter 5:6-11)?

Ultimately, we know as believers that Satan's power over Christians has already been broken and that the great war has been won through Christ's crucifixion and resurrection; which forever conquered the power of sin and death. While on earth, battles of temptation against sin and these forces of evil go on regularly however, through the Lord's power, the strength of his Spirit, and the force of biblical truth, we will stand victorious. Next study, we will wrap up the book of Ephesians examining the spiritual armour of God that we have been equipped with.