

*The Christian Life*  
*Part 5b*  
*Submission*

Eph 5:18-6:9

- 18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;  
19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;  
20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;  
21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.  
22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.  
23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.  
24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.  
25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;  
26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,  
27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.  
28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.  
29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:  
30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.  
31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.  
32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.  
33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Ephesians 6

- 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.  
2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)  
3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.  
4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.  
5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;  
6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;  
7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:  
8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him. KJV

### **Introduction:**

We have been discussing for the last few Sundays how the last half of the book of Ephesians works out to be an excellent little manual for Christian living. We have moved from the great design and goals of the Christian church to the individual ‘giftings’ of the Holy Spirit to practical manifestations of Christian repentance to our lesson on the fulness of the Holy Spirit.

After Paul gave his admonition “be filled with the Holy Spirit,” he gave some further instructions which are to be seen as ‘fall-out’ from this new life in Christ and he spent some time on this subject of ‘submission.’

We have already spoken to this idea but let me go over this issue again, ‘submission’ and ‘subjection’ are two very different things. Anyone with sufficient power over you can put you in subjection. A police officer who pulls you over to let you know that you have a tail light out has all of the power he needs to put you in ‘subjection’ by force if you decide to act in a foolish way. This has nothing to do with your permission or agreement to the ‘subjection.’ He can take you down, handcuff you, stuff you in the back of his car and take you to jail, all without any voluntary actions on your part. If he needs to he can even take your life. This is one example of ‘subjection.’ The reason that I bring this up is that there are people who call themselves ‘Christian’ who think that what Paul is saying here is that the husband/father/boss is to make sure that he has wife/children/employees in ‘subjection’ to him.

In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. The admonition concerning ‘submission’ is directed toward the wife/child/employee. They are taught to voluntarily ‘submit’ to the leadership of the husband/father/employer. But they are taught to do so in a particular setting, as the husband/father/employer models the loving, serving, self-sacrificing behavior of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to call your attention again to the structure of this passage. There are 25 verses in this section on ‘submission.’ There are 3 verses directed toward wives, 3 directed to children, and 4 to servants/employees. On the other hand, there are 11 that target the husband/father/employer. Those that target the authority figure set the stage for the ‘submission’ of the others.

We learned that the model for the husband/father/employer is Jesus Christ in His redeeming work toward His people, the church. We learned that any human who is to be an authority figure in the life of another must first submit himself in a very real way to Jesus Christ. The submission of Christ to the Father and to the mission of saving His people is the pattern for all of the submission in the passage. He who refuses to submit to Christ has neither the right nor the position to expect others to ‘submit’ to him. His best alternative is to strive for ‘subjection’ but that is not being taught in this text.

**I. Let’s begin by remembering and affirming that every person in this ‘world’ that Paul is envisioning has a First and Primary loyalty to Jesus Christ.**

The wife, the child, the servant, and the authority figure are to, first and foremost, submit themselves to the Lord Himself.

The primary admonitions of the Lord are: (1) Love the Lord Your God with ALL your heart, mind, soul and strength, (2) Love your neighbor (anyone who needs you) as yourself, and (3) Repent: confess, forsake, turn from all sins to the contrary of #'s 1 and 2, and give yourself in voluntary, complete, and unequivocal obedience to ALL of the commands, ordinances, and instructions of the Lord Jesus and His apostles, contained in the New Testament.

Understand this. No one has any biblical nor reasonable expectation that others will 'submit' to him who has not first submitted himself to Christ. And this. All of the people who might be expected to submit to him are to be first and primarily submitted to the Lord Jesus. They are duty bound to submit to nothing that is contrary to Him and His Laws.

Let me repeat what we studied last week. Jesus Christ earned trusting submission by first submitting Himself not only as the Servant of God but also the Servant of man.

Phil 2:5-11

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:  
6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:  
7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:  
8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.  
9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:  
10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;  
11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. KJV

John 13:3-5

3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;  
4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.  
5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. KJV

So, let me say to everyone here today, you must submit yourself to Jesus Christ. He is the Only Person who has ever shown such concern and faithfulness for your soul that you can fully trust Him to care for you, support and sustain you, and keep you through death unto Eternal Life.

In fact, I can honestly say that if you refuse to submit to Him you are being extremely foolish and turning from the One Who truly cares for you.

**I. So, now, let us begin... “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”**

Let’s first of all look at what this does not mean. This does not mean that the husband takes the place of the Lord in the life of a married woman. Nor does it mean that she must obey him absolutely in all things.

It does mean that within the parameters of the wife being subject to the Lord in all things, she generally yields to the leadership of her husband.

Why do I say ‘generally yields’? There is a story from the OT that illustrates the fact that even under the Old Covenant there were limits to a wife’s obligations.

The story is taken from the life of David, while he lived as an outlaw being hunted by Saul who had a desire to kill him so that he would not become the next king of Israel. A goodly band of men had come out into the countryside to join themselves to David during this time. For a while they camped near the fairly large farm of a man by the name of Nabal. Striving to live as a good citizen, David protected the flocks of Nabal that grazed where he was encamped. On more than one occasion he fended off bandits who would have stolen the flocks and probably murdered the shepherds.

There came a time when David’s supplies ran low and he sent a request to Nabal to consider giving what he could spare to help feed the men that followed him. Nabal’s response was quite rude and ungrateful. This was in keeping with his known character.

1 Sam 25:3

3 Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb. KJV

Nabal was from a good family, Caleb being one of the heroes of the great war of conquest which seized the Promised Land from the Canaanites. Nabal basically denied the request and assaulted the character of David, calling him nothing more than a runaway slave who kept company with ruffians and outlaws.

1 Sam 25:10-11

10 And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master.

11 Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be? KJV

David was so insulted by the man’s response that he determined to lay waste to his possessions, possibly taking Nabal’s life.

1 Sam 25:13

- 13 And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff. KJV

But, Nabal's wife was told of the incident by one of the servants. She resolved to do the right thing, without her husband's permission, simply because it was a right thing to do.

1 Sam 25:14-28

- 14 But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them.
- 15 But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields:
- 16 They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.
- 17 Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.
- 18 Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses.
- 19 And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal.
- 20 And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them.
- 21 Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good.
- 22 So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.
- 23 And when Abigail saw David, she hastened, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground,
- 24 And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.
- 25 Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.
- 26 Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.
- 27 And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord.
- 28 I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. KJV

Abigail was submitted to the Lord first. She knew that David was a man of God and that her husband was a son of the Devil. The name 'Nabal' means 'fool' and she honestly declared that to David. She interceded for her husband's life even as she did that which she knew would make him terribly angry. She is considered a biblical heroine and she so impressed David that he married her after Nabal died at the hand of God.

There are many object lessons which might be drawn from this passage, but let it suffice us to note that biblical submission of a wife to her husband is never to be taken as God's requirement that a woman do wrong or fail to do right simply because her husband is foolish.

She is to submit to him AS she submits to the Lord, with the Lord always first.

I. **“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...”**

This is, without doubt, the most all-encompassing and difficult commands of the entire passage, not because wives are difficult to love but because many of us as husbands are more like Nabal than David. Those of us who are honest will confess that there is much more 'son of Belial' in us than child of God.

The love of Christ, as we have already considered, is a self-sacrificing, pure, and holy love that places the needs of those loved far above His own.

And, how is it that we mere mortals can ever hope to duplicate in any way the love of Christ for His people?

We must get to know Him really well. We must spend time with Him, study Him, consider His Great Work, marvel at Him, and see Him as the example that we would love and covet to imitate.

We must see the great value of His love and realize that it is just because of that love that we have submitted ourselves to Him... and we must make sure that we have actually done that.

We will learn the great rule of Christ as to how one becomes a person to whom others submit.

Mark 10:42-45

42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. KJV

Such a person, as Christ was, is worthy of the submission of others.

May the Lord help us so to be!

I. **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.”**

Children are to obey their parents, this is a principle that God has given from the beginning. Children ought to do willingly and without complaining what their father and their mother tell them to do.

But, even here, notice that Paul couches the command with “in the Lord.” Parents have no right to require their children to do that which the Lord forbids. Nor do they have the right to forbid them to do what the Lord commands.

For example, a parent does not have the right to command a child to lie, and the child is not required by God to honor and obey such a command.

A parent may not forbid a child to go to church, and a child is not required to obey when the parent forbids a right thing to do.

No one is required by God to forfeit, to give up, his conscience, his knowledge of right and wrong because a parent is in rebellion against Him.

It is right to obey parents. Paul even points out that there is a promise from God attached to it, that the one who does so may rightly expect a long and prosperous life. It is honorable. It is godly. It is noble. And it is wise.

Fathers (parents) are forbidden to ‘exasperate’ their children, to so rule over them that the rulership itself becomes a problem and a reason for a child to rightly resent and be angry with their parents.

In general, children are to obey. Parents, however, do not have any God-given right to abuse them and rule over them in an ungodly way. Children may rightly disobey any commands that are ungodly.

I. **“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ”**

The same rules apply to servants/employees in their relationships with masters/employers. They are to consider it service to God to be faithful to those who provide their living.

They must remember, however, that it is “as unto Christ.” This obedience does not extend to doing wrong because an employer requires it. We have the option in our culture always to choose a different job and many Christians have chosen (well) to give up an extremely well-paying job for one that pays less because of the demands by an employer that run contrary to the commands of God.

And employers are required to remember that they have a Master themselves. “And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.”

God doesn't care that you have authority, that you are wealthy, or that you have power. You will answer to God just like the employee. In fact, you will have greater accountability in the relationship than those you may rule over.

**I. I hope that you see in this lesson that the primary duty that we all have is to be submissive to Christ.**

In families where husband, wife, and children are truly submitted to Christ, things go generally better than where any one of those individuals is not.

So, are you submitted to Christ?

If you have never officially submitted to Him, repented of your sins and committed yourself to Him in obedience, you are not submitted.

If you have trusted Him but are living your own life, failing to read regularly His commands and do them, failing to spend regular time in prayer, failing to treat others according to the example that He set, you are not submitted to Him.

As a result, you are failing to obey the command that guides this whole section.

**Eph 5:18-21**

- 18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;**
- 19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;**
- 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;**
- 21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.**

I encourage you to repent of all sins connected with any failure to guide your life according to the principles contained in this passage.

Wives, children, employees repent of rebellion and disobedience.

Husbands, fathers, employers, repent of failing to be guided by the example of Christ in your dealings with those over whom you have some measure of authority.

Be filled with the Spirit.

Be followers of Christ.

**Eph 5:1-2**



- 1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;**
- 2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. (A fragrant smelling sacrifice)**