

Sunday May 10<sup>th</sup> 2009  
To the Church of Ephesus – Part Thirteen

1). Eph 5:17 *Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 ¶ submitting to one another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.*

a). We have seen in our study over the past two weeks that being wise, walking circumspectly and walking worthy of our calling are inextricably connected to our being continually filled with the Spirit.

b). It is the work of the Holy Spirit through our receiving with meekness the implanted word, the word of His grace, that brings about the metamorphosis on the inside of us. An inward change toward holiness that will in that Day result in an outward change to glory.

c). It is because of this inward change as the Holy Spirit guides us into all truth - Joh 16:13 *"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.*

d). That we are able to appropriate the grace we have been given to humble ourselves - 1Pe 5:6 *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,*

e). Humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God speaks of a choice to faithful obedience in the midst of our struggle with our fleshly desires, motivated by the absolute certainty of the hope that is set before us.

f). It comes from the stark yet inspiring realization that we must choose the wisdom of God through the scriptures if our hope is ever to be realized and that we have so much to lose if we don't.

g). And this goes hand in hand with the acceptance that our life may have to be stood on its head as we choose to walk this narrow path.

h). And that we will have a price to pay not only in the death of our flesh, but also through the rejection and castigation of the world as our choices fly in the face of all that is 'politically correct'.

i). This is hard, this is difficult, but the victory is ours, if we will only trust God enough to walk in it - 1Jo 5:4 *For whoever is a child of God is overcoming the world; and our faith is the victory that has overcome the world.*

j). And our victory is assured through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ - Joh 16:33 *"I have said all this to you that in me you might have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but be courageous; I have overcome the world."*

k). So if Christ is the provider and model of our victory, how did He overcome the world? - Php 2:5 *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

l). Our victory then, in this present age is through sacrifice, humility, obedience and submission as we choose to subject ourselves to the Word of God. Doing nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit but in lowliness of mind.

m). Lu 14:8 *"When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; 9 "and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. 10 "But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. 11 "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

2). It is always the Word of God that we subject ourselves to and yet our subjection to the Word is always expressed through our relationship with others – hence, ‘wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord’.

a). The wife is to submit herself, as to the Lord, through obedience to the command of scripture – and then in that place of submission to put herself under the authority of her husband as her God appointed head.

b). The wife’s submission comes through her choice to humble herself under the mighty hand of God, and this humility before God is then demonstrated in her relationship to her husband.

c). In the same way, the husband submits himself to his Head, which is Christ, and then his submission to Christ is expressed through his relationship with his wife - Eph 5:25 *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,*

d). Both the husband and the wife work together in harmony in this, but neither is reliant on the obedience of the other in order to fulfill their part, as their obedience is to the word not to their spouse per se. And yet, as head, it is the husband's responsibility to take the lead by providing a head that his wife can follow.

e). And if either one is choosing to walk in disobedience they make the faithfulness of the other incredibly difficult. But, the husband as head bears a greater responsibility in this as the nature of his headship has a direct impact on his wife's preparation for the Judgment Seat.

f). And so through a faithfully obedient marriage relationship we have a major facet of the picture of our relationship to Christ. Those who are husbands and wives must practice the commands of scripture if they are to be part of the Bride in that coming Day.

3). Then continuing with the theme of obedience to God expressed through relationship Chapter 6 of Ephesians continues as follows - Eph 6:1 ¶ *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: 3 "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."*

a). Obey = Greek – 'hupakouo' = to hear under (as a subordinate), i.e. to listen attentively; by implication, to heed or conform to a command or authority:--hearken, be obedient to, obey.

b). Here again we are dealing with submission, children to parents, but we can see from our word 'obey' here that we are dealing with obedience within a subordinate relationship. The wife is never seen as subordinate to her husband, but children clearly are. They are, according to our scripture, to obey, to hear under, because their parents are automatically placed over them in the sense of being their superiors.

c). According to God's perspective this is the right thing for children to do – Col 3:20 *Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.*

d). Not only is it right, but there is also God's promise attached to it for those children who will obey.

e). And we should note that for all of us with parents living, we are to honor them – irrespective of what they do. Again this is an issue between us and the Lord, not us and our parents. No matter how difficult the situation may be a way must be found for honor to be given.

f). There is also a terminal point with regards to obedience to parents that would be marked by the children leaving their home and becoming geographically and financially independent.

g). There is no terminal point for giving honor however.

4). Our scripture then continues by presenting the other side of the coin, just as we saw with wives and then husbands, this time with fathers, who are themselves children of God, being called to obedience with regards to the way they are to raise their children - Eph 6:4 *And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*

a). And here we see that fathers are not to do one thing, 'provoke your children to wrath', but rather to do another, 'bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.' And these two are placed side by side so as to provide the necessary contrast. Fathers will either bring up their children in the training and admonition of the Lord, and if not they will provoke them to wrath.

b). Provoke = Greek – 'parorgizo' = to anger alongside, i.e. enrage:--anger, provoke to wrath.

c). In the same way that God does not provoke us now, to wrath in that coming Day, fathers are not to provoke their children, through their actions, to wrath.

d). There is a possibility here that we may never have considered and that is that our actions as fathers could have a direct impact on what happens to our children at the Judgment Seat. Again this does not take away the individual responsibility of our children to make their own choices, but what they see in us might influence the choices they make. All the while our children are in our home under our authority we have opportunity to build into their lives with a view to the Judgment Seat in the same way that we can build into the life of our wife.

e). So fathers – and please note who bears the responsibility for this – are to bring up [to raise up to maturity] their children in the training and admonition of the Lord.

f). The pattern that God sets for raising His children – unconditional love, compassion, mercy, grace, forgiveness, sympathy and discipline, is to be our model - Heb 12:5 *And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present,*

*but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

g). Just as God brings the necessary discipline to us because His love wants us to be successful at the Judgment Seat, so we need to train our children in the wisdom of God with a view to the same end.

h). And again the challenge here for parents is acting in a way that is scripturally correct and not 'politically correct' – and to work with their children to help them understand why we don't live like the world lives.

i). The good news of course is that we are given the grace to do this. But this by no means takes away the challenge.

j). What we may conclude then is that obedience and the giving of honor on the part of our children is directly impacted by the role of their father.

k). No doubt fathers will give an account for this in that Day.

l). And just as with the marriage relationship, children and parents provides us with another facet of our relationship with God. For we are all His children and subordinate to our Heavenly Father. We can see then how parents with children who are faithfully obedient to the commands of scripture provide a valuable picture for us all of how we are to relate to God - Mt 18:1 ¶ *At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, 3 and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

5). Our scripture now moves away from relationship within the family to the relationship of master and bondservant - Eph 6:5 *Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; 6 not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.*

a). Now within our setting here in the West there is no master/bondservant relationship as we find in our scripture and so we would normally take this over into an employer/employee relationship. And this is a perfectly reasonable thing to do. However, once we do this it does give rise to some intriguing challenges.

b). Once again with the master/bondservant relationship we have another facet to the picture of our relationship with Christ. We have already seen the marriage relationship and the picture that gives to us, and we have seen the father/son relationship and the picture that gives to us, and now we have the master/bondservant relationship. As a bondservant of Christ the bondservant in the natural expresses his submission to Christ through his relationship with his master.

And the master in the natural expresses his submission to his Master through his relationship to his bondservant. It is fascinating to see the way God has put this together.

c). So in order to deal with some practicalities let's bring in a few more scriptures - Tit 2:9 *Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.*

d). Here in Titus we see that bondservants are to be obedient to their own masters. They are to be well pleasing in all things. There is not to be criticizing and complaining or stealing. But rather than 'answering back' or 'pilfering' they are to show good fidelity.

e). Fidelity = Greek – 'pistis' = persuasion, i.e. credence; moral conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), especially reliance upon Christ for salvation; abstractly, constancy in such profession; by extension, the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself:--assurance, belief, believe, faith, fidelity.

f). And here in the word 'fidelity' we have the key – the bondservant, because of the truth of God, has complete reliance on Christ for salvation. And this is what governs the bondservant's actions within this relationship as he looks to his future hope not to his present circumstances.

i). To bring this over into the employer/employee relationship would be fairly simple as the way the bondservant is to conduct himself is exactly the same as the employee. In the workplace the employee's first allegiance is to God, and his faithful obedience as a bondservant of Christ will be evident in his conduct towards his employer. His aim will be to please in every aspect of his work, which will be done without complaining or criticizing, taking not so much as a paper clip for himself.

g). 1Ti 6:1 ¶ *Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. 2 And those[bondservants] who have believing masters, let them[the bondservants] not despise them[the masters] because they[the masters] are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.*

h). Here in Timothy we have the bondservant exhorted to count their own master 'worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed'. And this is then taken a stage further with instructions concerning how a believing bondservant is to relate to a believing master.

i). Despise = Greek – 'kataphroneo' = to think against, i.e. disesteem:--despise.

j). In other words the believing bondservant is not to expect preferential treatment from his believing master, nor is he ever to think against, or disesteem him because the master does not meet his expectations as a believer.

i). As believers and potential joint heirs of the Kingdom both the believing employee and employer are entirely equal, but with regards to their role in the workplace they are not.

ii). The employee must respect the difference in role and not allow their equality before the Lord to cloud the issue. The employer must be seen as worthy of all honor, simply because of his position, and that honor must be given unconditionally in faithfulness to the command of scripture.

iii). If this is not done, according to our scripture then the name of God and His doctrine will have been blasphemed.

iv). Blasphemed in the face of those who may be non believers, blasphemed in the face of any other believing employees within the same workplace.

v). And then all this is brought over into the body as a whole because of what every joint supplies.

vi). As we have a number of you in this very situation, you need to take heed of what the scripture says – there will be an account given for this.

vii). The scripture clearly says that the believing employee is to serve the believing employer because the one who benefits from this is a believer and is also beloved of God.

viii). Ro 14:4 *Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls.*

k). Col 3:22 *Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.*

*23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.*

l). As we move into Colossians we see the admonition to obedience in all things in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And again God needs to be feared in this because ‘he who does wrong’, the bondservant who doesn’t do this, ‘will be repaid for what he has done’. And again, the first level of submission here is ‘as to the Lord and not to men’, because the bondservant, through his relationship to his master, ‘serves the Lord Christ’. And the end result of being faithful in this is made abundantly clear – ‘from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance’ – once again it is the Kingdom perspective that brings all this into focus.

i). And again here this will translate exactly into the employee/employer relationship.

ii). It is of course the sincerity of heart in the fear of God that needs close attention.

iii). And within the workplace, whatever the employee is asked to do must be done whole heartedly, to the best of their ability, without shortcuts; knowing that faithfulness in this leads to the reward of the inheritance as the service is really being given to Christ.

m). 1Pe 2:18 *Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. 19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:*

n). Then when we come to Peter, with all we have already looked at in view, we are presented with a significant challenge.

o). The bondservant is to be submissive, ‘not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh’.

p). Harsh = Greek – ‘skolios’ = warped, i.e. winding; figuratively, perverse:-crooked, froward, untoward.

q). According to our scripture - *19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God[being faithfully obedient to God’s commands to the bondservant] one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.*

r). There is no recourse to a trades union, a law suit or a mediator here, only patient endurance. And this is how it should be in the work place. Our western idea of if we don’t like the way we are treated we just move on would fly in the face of scripture and take from us a valuable opportunity, because these harsh circumstances that come at the hand of our employer are to be endured for a very specific reason - *21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:*

6). It is one of those remarkable scriptural paradoxes, that in the harsh treatment is a greater opportunity for faithful obedience and fruit production than in the good and the gentle.

a). And in the bondservant’s correct response to this same harsh situation in the natural is the picture of the Christ like bondservant patiently enduring the trials of life in the service of his Master in the realm of the spirit. This is the example that should be set and witnessed within the body as a whole.

b). Pr 27:18 ¶ *Whoever keeps the fig tree will eat its fruit; So he who waits on his master will be honored.*

7). Our scripture then shows us the reverse side of this coin - Eph 6:9 *And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.*

a). And here we have it – the believing master/the believing employer is himself a bondservant of his own Master in heaven. The implication is that the way the master on the earth treats his bondservant, just as with husbands and fathers, will translate into the way he will be treated by his Master in heaven. And this is likely reference to the Judgment Seat once again.

b). Doing the same things to them, their bondservants, in context, has to do with acting in good will and doing good and this is set against ‘threatening’, which literally means to be a menace.

c). If the master/employer is good and gentle in his treatment of those in his employ, then he will receive the same from the Lord. The investment in faithful obedience here not only benefits the bondservant/employee but also the master at the Judgment Seat.

d). If on the other hand he chooses to be a menace, he needs to remember that God judges without partiality and scripture will become very real – Heb 10:31 *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

8). And so then we can see from the end of Ephesians Chapter 5 through the beginning of Chapter 6 that three examples of submission are presented, each of which focuses on a different facet of our complete relationship to Christ.

a). The church is to relate to the Lord as a prospective wife and through our marriages we are to model this relationship. And whether we are a husband or a wife our faithful obedience to Christ with regards to our assigned role and responsibility moves us towards the fulfillment of the picture it presents.

b). We then saw the relationship between children and parents with particular emphasis on the relationship between father and child. And this relationship presents the picture of us as children of God. And again, whether we are a father or a child our faithful obedience to Christ in this relationship moves us closer to being adopted as a first born son in that Day.

c). And lastly we saw the relationship between the master and the bondservant and how this pictures for us our relationship with Christ as our Master and us as His bondservants. And whether we would be slave or free, master/bondservant, our faithful obedience to Christ in respect to our role moves us closer to hearing the words - Mt 25:21 *"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and*

*faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'*

d). And we will realize of course that every single one of us find ourselves in one or more of these pictures and it is our submission to Christ in whatever capacity He places us that is to be a part of what every joint supplies to the body. In each of us then it should be possible to see the model and the picture that we are to represent. Each of us has a role to play and each of us is significant in what we bring to each other. Whoever thought that we would have such an impact on each other's race of faith.

e). Let's make sure that we grasp the opportunity that is given to us.

f). 2Ti 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*