

Walking Wisely by the Spirit
“Submitting to God-Given Authority”
Palmetto Baptist Church

Biblical Texts:

- Ephesians 5:21* Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.
- Titus 3:1-2* Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.
- Hebrews 13:17* Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you

Introduction:

- We have made some stunning discoveries in our journey through Ephesians – we have come to see and understand jaw-dropping, breath-taking, and life-impacting realities that are going on around us every day.
- The most monumental of these realities is the plan God is working out right now to restore shalom (peace, order, harmony, divine favor, and blessing) to every part of His universe – both in this earthly realm and in the spiritual realm that Paul calls ‘the heavnlies.’ (1:9-10).
- We also saw that there is an ancient enemy who has deployed massive, powerful, wicked spiritual armies to fight against this plan at every conceivable location (6:10-13).
- Perhaps most stunning of all is the realization that we are actually key participants in bringing this plan to fruition and, as members of God’s army, we are to join in this battle to hold the ground where God’s plan has already been established – in His church, in our personal lives, and in our household relationships.
- So that we know how to fulfill God’s purposes for us in this plan that He is unfolding, God has done several important things for us:

- He has enlightened us by telling us the plan and opening our eyes to understand that plan (1:15-23).
- He has sent the Holy Spirit to enable us to fulfill this plan by energizing us with the unlimited power of God (3:14-21).
- He has commissioned Christ to give us gifts by which we are equipped and prepared for the work of the ministry of advancing this plan (4:1-16).
- And He has provided very specific wisdom from the Spirit by which we are to live carefully and intentionally so that we display the transforming power of this plan in the most important relationships that make up our daily lives (Eph 5:15-17).

- This wisdom is from God and will require things:
 - 1) A unique ministry from the Holy Spirit who indwells us – “filling.” We must allow the Spirit to be filling us with the communicable attributes of God and the fruits of the Spirit so that those attributes and that fruit mark us and shape who we are and what we are like in every area of our lives.
 - 2) A unique submission to the Spirit’s authority in our life – “walking” (Gal 5:16-26). Living according to the Spirit’s instructions, commands, and desires.

- When we are walking wisely by responding to the Spirit’s ministry, three things will be true of us:
 - a. Our communication will be transformed (5:19)
 - b. Our attitude will be transformed (5:20)
 - c. Our relationships will be transformed (5:21-6:9)

- The evidence of the Spirit’s powerful transformation of our relationship is the fact that we are consistently marked by a particular manifestation of spiritual humility – a submission that is motivated and driven by our devotion and worship of Christ (5:20)
- So what does Spirit produced and enabled submission look like?

- The point that Paul is making here is there is actually a way to test and to confirm a person’s claim to be spiritual. When a person claims to love Christ

and to be devoted to Him, there is actually a way to test this claim – is the person claiming to be spiritual submissive to the authorities God has established over them?

- ***In other words – a person who claims to be spiritual but is resisting the authorities God placed over them is not spiritual at all. In fact, this person is actually proud and someone whom God is resisting!*** Let me give you three clear texts that state this:

Romans 13:2 *Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.*

James 4:6 *But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."*

1 Peter 5:5 *Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."*

So, this morning, we need to make sure we understand what the Bible has to say about this matter of submission.

I. The Meaning of Biblical Submission

- At the heart of the idea of biblical submission is the concept of order – proper arrangement within the relational structures that exist both the earthly and heavenly realm.
- This structure was disrupted, damaged, and distorted in heaven by Satan's fall and on earth when Adam fell.
- God is working out His plan through Christ to restore "shalom" or relational order in the Cosmos. The heart of that plan is restored relationships that are rightly ordered to Him and to others.

A. Defined -- *uportassw* (38x in NT)

- It comes from a word that means to arrange or place, and is a preposition that means under – ***So this word means arranging or placing something under something else.***

- When it is used with people it means to arrange someone in his/her proper place or rank – soldiers to officers in an army.
- It did not initially mean “obey,” but it did carry the idea of someone taking their proper place or being arranged properly in relationship to someone else in authority.

B. *Described*

1. This is to be done personally – everyone has to do this not just women.
2. This is to be done voluntarily (middle voice – yourselves).
3. This is to be done persistently – (present tense)

C. *Delineated – to one another*

- This term depicts a person properly arranging himself/herself under someone else’s legitimate authority.
- A recent view has articulated that this is really just making sure that every person acts kindly and serves every other person. (But other “mutual” statements do not present full reciprocity in the “one another” part – Rev 6:4; Gal 6:2; 1 Cor 11:33; Luke 2:15; 21:1; 24:32).
- While we should love and serve everyone – that is not Paul’s point – He is stressing the idea that in the differing relationships that a believer has he/she is to properly submit to those God has given authority to over him/her.
- And we are to do this because this is how God designed it!

Illustrated: Jesus about His Father’s business but submitted to flawed, earthly parents who didn’t have the complete picture
Luke 2:51 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart.

So Biblical Submission means to willingly and voluntarily take one’s proper place in obedience and subjection to all God-given authority. But

where does this apply – under what circumstances and in what relationships?

II. The Manifestation of Biblical Submission

A. In the World – to all legitimate Civil Authorities

Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

Titus 3:1 Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,

1 Peter 2:13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme,

B. In Christian Marriage

Ephesians 5:24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Colossians 3:18 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Titus 2:5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

1 Peter 3:1 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,

C. In Christian Households

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Colossians 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.

D. In Christian Vocation

Ephesians 6:5-6 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;

Colossians 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.

Titus 2:9 Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back,

1 Peter 2:18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.

E. In Christ's Church

1 Peter 5:5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

1 Corinthians 16:16 that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

III. The Models of Biblical Submission

The Scripture clearly teaches that every Christian has equal value to the Lord and equal standing before the Lord. Several texts teach these important truths:

- Gal 3.28 clearly establishes there is no qualitative or substantive difference between image bearers based on gender, ethnicity, or social or religious standing.
- 1 Peter 5:7 reminds us that men and women are equally co-heirs who one day will rule with Him
- 1 Peter 2:9 plainly teaches that each of us is an individual priest before God with full and equal access to the throne of His grace.

So ... what does submission actually look like when it happens among people who have equal value and equal standing with one another?

A. Jesus Christ modeled it on Earth.

- In His functional relationship to His Father (Mt 10:40; 26:39,42; Jn 8:29,42; 12:49)
- In His functional relationship to His earthly parents (Lk 2:49-52)

B. *Holy Spirit models it in Heaven.*

- In His functional relationship to God the Father (Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15)
- In His functional relationship to God the Son (Jn 16:7; 14:26; 15:26)

C. *The Church models it now in this Realm.*

- To her Heavenly Shepherd – Christ (Eph 5:23-24)
- To her Earthly under-shepherds – Pastors/Elders (Heb 13:17)

Think of the impact of the submission of these individuals – Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Church all manifest a life marked by submission.

It looks like willing, joyful submission driven by loving devotion and loyal obedience to the desires and expectations of the authority structure God established in all relationships.

IV. The Importance of Biblical Submission

- Note – Eph 5:21 is an imperative in the present tense – it is not a suggestion, and it is not a one-time act.
- Believers are commanded to voluntarily and joyfully arrange themselves under their authorities and to stay that way all the time. For Paul to state it this strongly there must be important reasons:

A. *We are all members of a Body – Christ is our Head*

Romans 12:5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. (This section from 12:12-27 is all about us being members of Christ's body)

Ephesians 1:22-23 *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

Ephesians 5:23-24 *For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴ Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.*

Colossians 1:18 *And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*

There is only one Head (Christ) and all the members of His body are to joyfully and willingly arrange themselves submissively under His authority instead of resisting it or rebelling against it!

B. *We are participants in a plan to reunify everything under Christ and to restore shalom to the cosmos.*

Ephesians 1:10 *That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:*

1 Corinthians 15:28 *Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.*

- God intends for all creation to be in submission to Him and is working to bring this about.
- But in this present age, not everything is under submission.
Hebrews 2:8 *You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him.
But now we do not yet see all things put under him.*
- We are to be models now of this plan that is yet to come.

C. *We are soldiers in a Battle* – A Rebel (Satan) is our Enemy who is seeking to destroy or disfigure the shalom God has established through Christ and will one day establish on the earth.

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

- We must be loyal and obedient soldiers ***for the preservation of truth*** and ***for the advance of the Gospel***. We must stand firm and hold the ground that Christ has won for us by maintaining the unity (shalom) God has established among His people in the bond of peace! (Eph 4:1-3)

D. We are the Cosmic Display What it means to be Members of God's Household

- Households in Ephesus were badly broken models of the wrong use of power and the devastating damage this use of power brought on those who lived under its use. Wives found ways to resist it and to mark out spheres of independence that often thwarted the desires of her husband. Children resented it and were embittered by it. Servants recoiled from it by sabotaging its purposes, deviating from its priorities, and damaging its objectives wherever, however, and whenever they could get away with doing so.
- But there were people in Ephesus who had a very different experience in their Christian households. Power in those households was not used to control or to abuse but to serve and to grow those under its authority. Husbands, Fathers, and Masters all used their power and authority to serve their wives, children, and servants. They did so selflessly and sacrificially not out of mere kindness but driven by deep and genuine love.
- Consequently, those who were under such loving masters, loved them in return and rendered to them glad, willing, and joyful obedience all of which resulted in a household marked by “shalom” – in marked contrast to the other households in Ephesus.
- Pagans who saw this would conclude that such a household would surely have the favor of the gods ... where even the gods

would want to dwell, for even the gods did not enjoy such households. Zeus himself had a wife that thwarted his every purpose. The members of his own family regularly deceived him, thwarted his will, and displeased him greatly. His servants failed to worship him and disregarded his wishes and the only way to keep them in line was to grant them occasional good fortune or, more regularly, to hurl invectives and misfortune among them (think of the lightning bolts found in his hand).

- So . . . how did these households come to exist? And what God brought them about? Who are these people and who is their God? Answer – they are Christians who follow Christ and Jehovah is their God! It is by His power and grace that such households have been so transformed for His glory.

Note: This is why the boundaries of such submission are very clear and very important.

Submission to earthly authority is always framed around submission to God and to His will, His word, and His purposes. Believers must not submit when doing so violates anything God has set forth as His express will, that disregards or disobeys the clear teaching of His Word, or that damages or distorts the purposes He has set forth for believers.

We are to obey our earthly authorities as part of our obedience to our Heavenly Authority – but we must never obey our earthly authorities at the cost of disobeying or displeasing our Heavenly authority.

All of us have areas of life where we are called to obey and submit. All of us also have areas where we have been granted some level of authority – and we must use our authority in the ways and for the purposes that God uses His.

V. The Obstacles to Biblical Submission

- A. *Biblical Ignorance*** – we don't know what God said about this – we are ignorant. Hebrews tells us to be patient and compassionate to such people as we instruct them in the truth.
Romans 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.
Hebrews 5:2 He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness.
- B. *Spiritual Deception*** – Satan deceives us about what God has said regarding this!
2Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.
- C. *Cultural Influence*** – we are driven by the Spirit of the age that is at work in the sons of disobedience among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh (Eph 2:1-3)
- D. *Willful Rebellion*** – we know what God has said and our flesh refuses to obey and do God's revealed will!
Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, **nor indeed can be.**

If you are waiting for your flesh to finally give up and become submissive – it isn't going to happen. Your flesh can't submit! ***So – what do I do to solve this? Mortify it! And this requires grace!***

But there is a final statement given in this text to motivate us to mortify our flesh – the fear of the Lord!

VI. The Motive for Biblical Submission. . . in the fear of the Lord!

- The term “fear” here includes the idea of “awe” or “reverence,” but it is more than just that – it also includes the idea of fear in the sense of terror.
- In other words, we are to obey God because we should be afraid not to! However, that fear, as healthy and necessary as it may be, is not enough to sustain this kind of submission.
- Glad, willing submission is fueled by deep gratitude for what God has done for us, unwavering faithful devotion to Him for having first loved us, and an awe at how God, in the ultimate pursuit of His glory, uses His power and authority to serve us for our good! Only this is big enough and strong enough to sustain the kind of submission God desires – willing, voluntary, and joyful!

Conclusion:

So...given all the factors in me and around me – where the truth of God’s Word meets the road of my life, how am I going to actually and consistently submit in the way Paul has described?

And the answer to that important question is ... an enablement that comes only from God’s Spirit and a wisdom that will guide your steps in every relationship God has given you in life – marriage, home, and vocational calling. And the word Paul uses for that enablement is “grace” – the power from God that is powerfully at work in Jesus to enable Him to live His life of obedience and submission to God and others (Acts 10:38; Eph 1:20-23)); that was a work in Paul energizing his walk and work (Eph 3:7); and that is at work in us (Eph 1:19; 3:16).

The Means to Biblical Submission – God’s Grace!

- A prerequisite to receiving this grace is humility!
- And the fruit of humility is submissive obedience to authority.
- And you are not strong enough to do this – God has to give you grace.
James 4:6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

1 Peter 5:5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

And this kind of grace-enabled submission leads not only to God's glory but to our good – growth, maturity, stability, blessing – and to the advancement of the gospel around us.

So – are you in your place? Here are five important questions to help you:

1. Do you know your place Biblically?
2. Have you taken your place voluntarily and willingly?
3. Are you remaining in your place joyfully and consistently?
4. Are you advancing God's plan from your place humbly and obediently?
5. Are there places where you are not submitting where you should be and are there places where you are submitting in an effort to keep the wrong kind of peace where you should be obeying God rather than man.