

Reading: Ephesians 5.vvs 21 - 33. NLT

Paul, now turns to: Christian responses to **authority**.
He knew all about: ... **The 'Abuse' of authority**,
He'd **seen** it, He'd **practised** it, & been the **victim** of it.

Is there a **Supreme Authority** ? **Yes, God Himself, as Creator**, has the ultimate authority over all his creation.
Under God ... there's only ... **delegated authority**.

Paul, is teaching us how to apply:
God's principles ~ to our everyday life.
However ... and this is important ...

If someone **applies a good principle in the wrong way**
The principle, hasn't changed ~ **it's still good**.
Even ... **if the application ~ is wrong !**

Back in chapter 4, vs.17, Paul said:

With the Lord's authority let me say this:
Live no longer as the ungodly do,
For they are hopelessly confused.

And now ~ in Chapter 5. v21. He says:
Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ

The subject of '**submission**'
Has been the butt of many jokes !
As some leaders in both Church, & Business,
Have abused their role, & been difficult to work with.

Unfortunately, some husbands, and wives,
Have also learned how to '**manipulate a situation**'
to their own advantage.

But, **submission**: Is part of **all Christian relationships**.

*It has a role: in a **marriage** ~ relationship
in a **parental** ~ relationship
& in an **employment** ~ relationship*

In fact in Romans:13. Paul says: we should **also**,
Be **subject** to the **authority of the Government** !

So ~ "**appropriate**" **submission**,
Is part of **all our relationships: as Christians**.

Last time, we said: **Submission** can be **forced** on us,
or: we can choose it, **voluntarily**.
And in the New Testament, these two concepts
Were identified, by different spellings.

When, Paul & the others, were writing the books of the New Testament, there were many different languages used ... in different parts, of the Empire.

But, Greek was used for **local, & international trade**

Of course '**The scholars**' - preferred a classical style,
Using big words, with complicated meanings.

But everyone,

Understood the common market place Greek

So the N.T. was written, in this common Greek,

So that everyone, could understand it.

John 15.vs.9,10 Jesus said: **I have loved you, even as
the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.**

**When you obey me, you remain in my love,
Just as I obey my Father and remain in His love.**

So **Jesus**, was **always** '**in submission**' to his **Father** !

Yes I know that... when we mention:

'**Submission**' & '**Wives**' in the same sentence,

It may get a nervous laugh !

Perhaps you're thinking:

Paul had a funny attitude to women !

Maybe: We should take **what he says**,

With a 'grain of salt' !
If you're thinking like that ~ then we have a problem.

Because we believe, the NT **wasn't** written by a bunch
Of religious men, scribbling down their preferred rules.

But, by 'Men of God' writing under the inspiration,
of the **Holy Spirit** ! (2 Tim. 3.16,17. & Hebrews, 1.v1)

To keep a **balanced view** ~ of our subject.

Let's include, 2 other passages: **1Tim.2.11,12, Titus 2.1-5**

There are **3 distinct elements** in Paul's teaching:

1st, There's **God's eternal principles that don't change**

2nd, There were certain circumstances,
That belonged to the culture, of those times:
One was **regarding the education of girls.**
Most girls were **not** educated ... except:
By their 'mother' or 'grandmother'

But the boys ... were often sent away to study,
With the best teacher, the father could afford !

The teacher sat on a seat,
with a circle of students at his feet.
If the teacher was a **Jewish Rabbi**:
The boys learnt to **read, write, & count** in Hebrew.
So they could read & understand **The Laws of Moses**.

Were there exceptions ? ... 'Yes ... some'
Girls were more likely to get a formal education,
If their family was wealthy.
Because the fathers, in wealthy families,
Wanted all their sons ~ to have an educated wife !

But usually ~ girls only received a **secular education**
So the **issues in Ephesus**, were particularly about the:
Practices **developing** in the new Churches,
Not about **gender ... or Paul's personal prejudice**.

Back in (2016) when my daughter was working for:
World Vision in the Solomon Islands. She sat down
with a group of mothers to **encourage** them, to teach
their young children to **count**. But she found, these
mothers couldn't count themselves ~ not even to 10 !

When Paul says: **'I do not let women teach men or have
authority over them'** (1Tim. 2.12)

He's not commenting on 'gender'
But on the cultural situation of his day.
Saying: That those who've had no biblical training:
Shouldn't be teaching: ~ **what they've never studied.**
Remember **Mary** sitting at Jesus feet (like one of the boys)
She desperately wanted to learn more. But her sister
Martha ~ thought this was **quite inappropriate,**
When there was still work to be done, in the kitchen !

That this, was a cultural issue, is further supported by
the fact: that Paul worked happily with various women.
Including: **Priscilla**, wife of **Aquila**, they **both worked**
with Paul in Ephesus: (Rom.16.v3; 1.Cor.16.v19)

Also. In the O.T. ...there's an important precedent:
Deborah ... was both a prophet & a judge, (Judges 4)

3rd, Was the importance of **not flouting** local customs,
And giving: the wrong impression !
In the cities of Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, & so on.
The local prostitutes advertised their availability:
By cutting their hair **very short** & showing it,
By leaving their heads '**uncovered**'.
In each of the churches Paul wrote to.
There were ex-prostitutes in the congregation.

So he says: ‘Grow your hair ~ cover your head,
Change your appearance !
If it’s true that God has **changed you** ~ on the **inside**.
Show people you are different ~ on the **outside.**’

Even today, we assume things ~ **rightly, or wrongly,**
from how people present themselves !

We also need to remember, that the young churches
Largely followed the customs of a Jewish Synagogue.
Where, men **sat separately**, from women & children.

If the women started **chatting**, or **called out questions**,
they disturbed the worship. So Paul says:
‘Keep quiet **in church** ~ ask your questions at home’

All of these issues: as to what women **should**,
Or **should not do** ~ related to the culture of the time.
Unfortunately ~ **some men**: have redefined them,
Into that 1st category as: **Eternal principles.**

Coming back to **Ephesians 5. v.25. NLT**
You husbands must love your wives,
with the same love Christ showed the church.
He gave up his life for her ...

It's been said:

That if husbands loved their wives like this.

The wives would have no problem with 'submission'

Paul is saying:

When the husband & wife, **each show caring & love**,

The resulting harmony, will maintain good attitudes,

Even ... when they disagree, about something.

He says: **it's not a one-sided submission**,

But ... a reciprocal relationship.

A husband who expects 'submission' from his wife,
while failing to show a Christ-like love for her,

has no support, from the New Testament.

Moving on, to **Chapter 6. ~ we'll read vs1-3**

1stly ~ let me give you ~ 2 true stories:

Some years ago, **a man at Church**: told me

'Although I'm nearly 40 years old,

I believe, I must still obey my parents !

Because the bible doesn't say:

Children obey your parents, until you become an adult

So is this good reasoning ? ... No ! it's not.

Because ... **it's an argument from silence**,

Based on: ~ **what the Bible ... does not say.**

Many false teachings, have been built on such **silence**
The context clearly refers ~ to children growing up
In the home ... Not ... to 'Adult' children.

The second story: ... Involves a **girl** who'd **rebelled**
against her parents having **any say** in her life, **until**:
A friend took her to church ~ and she was **converted**.
Her father, **who was not a Christian**, was **not happy**.
But he did notice, some changes in her behaviour !

After a few weeks, he deliberately asked her to help
With the household chores, **on a Sunday morning**.
When she said: 'She wanted to go to church,
& could she help, after church' ~ he said: ~ '**No**'!

So she stayed and helped her mother as requested.

Later in the day, her father commented:
That she'd done what he'd asked, **without arguing**.
She replied ... 'At church I've been taught,
To honour my Father and Mother, and to obey them.'
It took a moment ... for this to sink in.

Then he said: '**If that's what they are teaching you**.
Then every Sunday, you're free to go to church'

v4. **And now a word to you fathers. Don't make your children angry, by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction approved by the Lord.**

Paul wrote a similar message in: **Col.3. (v21)**
Fathers, don't aggravate your children, if you do, they will become discouraged and quit trying.

One Commentator, has suggested ... that these verses:
'quiver with personal emotion'
Of course ~ it's only speculation.
But, **it could mean** ... that Paul himself,
Received ... rather harsh treatment from **his father.**

Which may explain why. As a zealous young **Pharisee**
Paul set out to catch and punish the Jews,
Who'd left: Judaism ~ to become Christians.

**It may also explain, why he was so disillusioned,
with John Mark ! (Acts 15.37, 38)**

When **Paul & Barnabas** set out on their:
First missionary journey ... John Mark,
The nephew of Barnabas ~ went with them.

But, part way thro' the trip, **he gave up & went home.**
Paul was so annoyed with John Mark's: '**desertion**'
That when they were setting out on the **second journey**
Paul said:... '**I'm not taking him with us.**'

Barnabas, wanted Mark to get a second chance !
But Paul felt so strongly about it, they parted company
And their quarrel broke up the team !

So God used the situation, to turn them into: **2 teams**,
Barnabus took Mark, and sailed for Cyprus.
While Paul chose Silas, and travelled through Syria,
To reach his home area: of Tarsus,
& then on through Turkey, all the way to Ephesus,
And later to Philippi, Athens, Corinth, etc.

So regardless, of whether Paul's own father was **kind**
or **harsh** ~ his advice in **Eph.6. v4** ~ is good advice !
Bringing these principles into our own lifetime:

A mother - at home with the children growing up,
gets to know their personalities,
through her close contact with them, every day.

A father - goes to work & mixes with adults all day,

At the end of the day, he comes home tired,
To be met by children, chasing each other, through
the house, and yelling at the top of their voices.

So Paul wants to address the danger of: **Children's
'submission'**~ being carried too far ! The danger of:
Mum's nice ... but Dad ... just gets mad at us.

There's another thought in these verses.
The danger: of children being discouraged,
by **inconsistency**. The rules need to stay the same,
And **not change** ~ with the mood of the parent.

Also consistency from **both parents**, is important.
A child soon learns, how to manipulate its parents.
If Mum says '**No**' ~ try Dad, ~ he might say '**Yes**'

And finally ~ **Slaves and Masters.**

It is interesting to note: That neither **Jesus**, in his
earthly ministry, nor the **disciples** writing the NT.
Spoke about ... '**getting rid of slavery**'
There's a lot of teaching: about **how to treat others**.
And **William Wilberforce**, appealed to the principles
Of the NT, in calling for **the Abolition of Slavery**.

Some slaves ~ were the ‘**spoils of war**’ !

So they were slaves, **for life**. (**Daniel**, is an example)

Others had **put themselves** ‘into service’
for a set amount of time, to work off the debts,
They **couldn’t repay**, any other way.

It **wasn’t** only ‘menial work’ that was done, by slaves.
Doctors and teachers, were often slaves.
Even the Emperor’s advisers, were often slaves.

You may have heard the name: ‘**Pliny**’ a Roman
Scholar who wrote: ... a **37 volume, Encyclopaedia**.
Pliny was still writing his Encyclopaedia.
When, **Paul was writing this letter** to the Ephesians.

In a letter written to a friend, **Pliny** says: He’s saddened
by the death, of some of his well-loved slaves.
But consoles himself ~ that he’d always been careful
to release them, when their ‘time’ was completed.

He even allowed them to make a ‘**will**’ ! And said:
‘**which I observe as rigidly, as if it were good, in law**’
While **Pliny** was clearly a ‘good’ master.
There were plenty ~ who were not.

In Roman law, a slave was not treated as a person,
He, or she, was just ... a living tool !
If a master ~ was cruel or unreasonable,
The slave ~ had **no 'official'** to complain to.

- v5. **Slaves obey your earthly masters
with deep respect and fear.
Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ.**

The same word for '**obedience**' ~ is used, for **children**,
for **slaves** ~ & for **soldiers** ~ obeying their orders.

- v6. **Work hard, but **not** just to please your masters
when they are watching. As slaves of Christ,
do the will of God with all your heart.**

The right heart attitude will produce the best work,
whether we're being: ~ **watched or not**.

And this is an important way of showing that:
As Christians ~ we're 'trustworthy'.

The attitude of: '**get away with, whatever you can**'
is very damaging, to anyone's reputation !
And it's **the opposite** of what Paul is teaching here.

v7 **Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.**

vs 8 & 9 Both emphasise that God has no favourites !

v9: **And in the same way, you Masters must treat your slaves right. Don't threaten them, Remember, you both have **the same Master** in heaven, and He has **no favourites**.**

Culturally, socially, & legally:

The master could do as he pleased, with his slaves.
No holds barred !

BUT... if he was a 'Christian' master,

He should have: **a different motivation.**

Displayed by ... completely **different behaviour !**

So, We've looked at:

Wives ~ Husbands ~ Children ~ Slaves & Masters.

The single **theme** that covers them all,

is found in our first verse: chapter 5.v21.

Submit to one another 'out of reverence for Christ'

And that's, the supreme motivation !