

Submitting To One Another, Ephesians 5:21-6:9

We submit manuscripts for publication. We submit bids on a job we want. No one is bent out of shape by the necessity of such – unless our manuscript or job bid is rejected, but that is another article.

“Submission“ has the sense of yielding to authority, and here is where some folk say, “Whoa.” A spirit of defiance pollutes many of our relationships, civil and spiritual, from the younger to the older. The fact is, our submission must be to both God and man. Submission toward God: James 4:7 - “Submit yourselves therefore to God” Submission to “one another”: Ephesians 5:21 - “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

An area that needs special attention is submission in the local church. “Obey your rulers and submit to them for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account” (Hebrews 13:17). From time to time, as elders – rulers -- make proper decisions, as they are charged with, some these decisions are unpopular. It is true, as the apostles said, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29); but that misses the point. Bishops (aka elders, pastors) have responsibilities of spiritual care and admonition, including chastening when needed. There should be no grumbling from the flock; decisions concerning the functioning of the flock should receive respectful submission, as God has spoken (Ephesians 5:22 – 6:9) The inspired writer names specific circumstances calling for submission. In 5:22, “Wives, submit to your own husbands” and 5:24, “the church submits to Christ.” He names other relationships (children/parents; servants/masters; masters/servants) which do not use the specific word, but the meaning is obvious.

The language of 5:21, “submitting to one another”, introduces the discussion in chapter six. The attitude expressed in “submit” is expanded in other terms in the New Testament.

For instance, In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said:

“If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24).

Acceptable worship demands a submissive attitude in dealing with our brother. Nothing is said about who is at fault in the matter: just, “go ... be reconciled.” Because, in all things we must submit to “one another.”

Again in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). Jesus taught, in your dealings with one another, submit—yield -- to them as “you would like them to submit to you.” To the Ephesians Paul wrote “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (4:32). He calls for them to be kind and forgiving to “one another.” When we are kind and forgiving to one another, we are imitating God who “in Christ forgave you.”

The writer in Hebrews 10:24 said, “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works....” The importance of love and good works is clear: Jesus said “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Only as we seek to stir up one another unto love and good works are we submitting as we should to “one another” and giving glory to God.

Patrick Farish

Christ Also Suffered For Us

When the apostle Peter writes his first epistle, he tells servants they are to be submissive to their masters, even those who are harsh (1 Peter 2:18). Certainly, this may involve suffering at the hands of those who had rule over them. In this discussion he reminds them of the suffering which Christ experienced for all of us (1 Peter 2:21). I dare say when we contemplate the suffering Messiah, most likely we are thinking about all the physical pain He endured. It is for sure the Christ suffered immensely for the sins of all the world. Let us consider some of the misery which Jesus suffered so that you and I could go to a place where there is no more pain (Revelation 21:4).

He suffered physical pain. In Mark 14:65, it says they (which would be the Jews) beat Him, and the officers (of the Sanhedrin) struck Him with the palms of their hand. The Roman soldiers took a reed and struck Him on the head, on which was a crown of thorns (Matthew 27:27-30). In John's account it says these soldiers struck Him with their hands (John 19:3). Pilate, the Roman Procurator of Judea, has Jesus scourged (John 19:1). Vincent gives this definition of the word "scourged":

"The punishment was horrible, the victim being bound to a low pillar or stake, and beaten, either with rods, or, in the case of slaves and provincials, with scourges, called scorpions, leather thongs tipped with leaden balls or sharp spikes. The severity of the infliction in Jesus' case is evident from His inability to bear His cross" (Word Studies in the New Testament).

Then after all this to have His hands and feet nailed to the cross to experience one of the most agonizing deaths ever inflicted upon a man (Psalm 22:16).

He suffered loss – what He gave up. He left heaven and came to a world filled with suffering and sin. Could you imagine a king giving up his palace, with all the comforts it affords, and going to live in a third world country in a hut where food is in short supply, with no running water, and no comfortable bed to sleep in, etc. This pales in comparison to what Christ gave up. There is a song which we sing entitled "Ivory Palaces" and in the chorus it says, "Out of the ivory palaces, Into a world of woe; Only His great eternal love, Made my Savior go." Paul said, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through

His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). He gave up the wealth of His heavenly condition, robbed Himself in flesh, accepting such poverty, and willingly faced the same temptations as we do. All this so that we might become rich in receiving the abundance of spiritual blessings bestowed upon us through Him.

He suffered mental distress. Could you imagine coming to your own people, trying only to do them good, and then they reject you? That is what Jesus did (John 1:11). Betrayed by one of His own disciples for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 27:3). When facing condemnation unjustly by His Jewish people, those who would become His apostles fled (Matthew 26:56). One of His closest companions would curse and swear, denying he even knew Him (Matthew 26:74). Treated with such indignity by being spit on, mocked and ridiculed by the Roman soldiers (Matthew 27:27-31). The chief priest and the elders persuaded the people to ask Pilate to release a common criminal rather than the Son of God (Matthew 27:20-26). And above all this, forsaken by His God (Matthew 27:46). This happened because of the determined purpose and foreknowledge of Jehovah (Acts 2:23). He let His Son die so that you and I could live.

Why did He suffer? One – it was to fulfilled prophecy concerning His coming and suffering. "But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled" (Acts 3:18). Two – to do the Father's will.

"Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come-- In the volume of the book it is written of Me-- To do Your will, O God'" (Hebrews 10:5-7).

Three – to redeem us from our sins. "who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

O Lord please help us to think often of all the suffering which Jesus endured to save our sinful souls and may it motivate us to live for Him faithfully each day.

Jim Mickells