

THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL: A STUDY OF EPHESIANS

(LESSON ONE HUNDRED AND SIX)

“OBEDIENT AS UNTO CHRIST”

(PART FIVE)

EPHESIANS 6:5-9

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.

In **Ephesians** chapter **5** and verse **21**, the Apostle Paul commences an extensive discussion of relationships that continues through to verse **9** of chapter **6**. The general principle is that of **mutual submission**. He writes, “*And submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ*” (**New English Translation**). We have stated that the principle of **mutual submission** is not only one of the practical results of the filling of the Spirit but is also the foundation of the more specific principles of

authority and submission as it relates to husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves.

In our last 4 Lessons, we have examined the relations between believing slaves and their masters of the first-century, which parallels the employee-employer relationship in our day. As in the relations between wives and husbands, and children and parents, the principle Paul is emphasizing is that of authority and submission as a manifestation of one who is filled with, and therefore controlled by, the Holy Spirit.

In this Lesson, we are going to look at the relations between a slave named Joseph and his masters in Egypt. We will read several verses located in **Genesis** chapters **37, 39-41** and **50** from the **New English Translation**, making comments as we deem them helpful to our understanding of the principles that we have been stressing.

Genesis 37:2-11

2 This is the account of Jacob. Joseph, his seventeen-year-old son, was taking care of the flocks with his brothers. Now he was a youngster working with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons because he was a son born to him late in life, and he made a special tunic for him.

4 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated Joseph and were not able to speak to him kindly.

5 Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it they hated him even more.

6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had:

7 There we were, binding sheaves of grain in the middle of the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose up and stood upright and your sheaves surrounded my sheaf and bowed down to it!"

8 Then his brothers asked him, “Do you really think you will rule over us or have dominion over us?” They hated him even more because of his dream and because of what he said.

9 Then he had another dream, and told it to his brothers. “Look,” he said. “I had another dream. The sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”

10 When he told his father and his brothers, his father rebuked him, saying, “What is this dream that you had? Will I, your mother, and your brothers really come and bow down to you?”

11 His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept in mind what Joseph said.

Genesis 39

1 Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt. An Egyptian named Potiphar, an official of Pharaoh and the captain of the guard, purchased him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him there.

2 The LORD was with Joseph. He was successful and lived in the household of his Egyptian master.

3 His master observed that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made everything he was doing successful.

4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal attendant. Potiphar appointed Joseph overseer of his household and put him in charge of everything he owned.

5 From the time Potiphar appointed him over his household and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian’s household for Joseph’s sake. The blessing of the LORD was on everything that he had, both in his house and in his fields.

6 So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; he gave no thought to anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well built and good-looking.

7 Soon after these things, his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me."

8 But he refused, saying to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not give any thought to his household with me here, and everything that he owns he has put into my care.

9 There is no one greater in this household than I am. He has withheld nothing from me except you because you are his wife. So how could I do such a great evil and sin against God?"

10 Even though she continued to speak to Joseph day after day, he did not respond to her invitation to go to bed with her.

11 One day he went into the house to do his work when none of the household servants were there in the house.

12 She grabbed him by his outer garment, saying, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his outer garment in her hand and ran outside.

13 When she saw that he had left his outer garment in her hand and had run outside,

14 she called for her household servants and said to them, "See, my husband brought in a Hebrew man to us to humiliate us. He tried to go to bed with me, but I screamed loudly.

15 When he heard me raise my voice and scream, he left his outer garment beside me and ran outside."

16 So she laid his outer garment beside her until his master came home.

17 This is what she said to him: “That Hebrew slave you brought to us tried to humiliate me,

18 but when I raised my voice and screamed, he left his outer garment and ran outside.”

19 When his master heard his wife say, “This is the way your slave treated me,” he became furious.

20 Joseph’s master took him and threw him into the prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined. So he was there in the prison.

21 But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him kindness. He granted him favor in the sight of the prison warden.

22 The warden put all the prisoners under Joseph’s care. He was in charge of whatever they were doing.

23 The warden did not concern himself with anything that was in Joseph’s care because the LORD was with him and whatever he was doing the LORD was making successful.

Genesis 40

1 After these things happened, the cupbearer to the king of Egypt and the royal baker offended their master, the king of Egypt.

2 Pharaoh was enraged with his two officials, the cupbearer and the baker,

3 so he imprisoned them in the house of the captain of the guard in the same facility where Joseph was confined.

4 The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be their attendant, and he served them. They spent some time in custody.

5 Both of them, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream the same night. Each man's dream had its own meaning.

6 When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were looking depressed.

7 So he asked Pharaoh's officials, who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why do you look so sad today?"

8 They told him, "We both had dreams, but there is no one to interpret them." Joseph responded, "Don't interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me."

9 So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph: "In my dream, there was a vine in front of me.

10 On the vine there were three branches. As it budded, its blossoms opened and its clusters ripened into grapes.

11 Now Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, so I took the grapes, squeezed them into his cup, and put the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

12 "This is its meaning," Joseph said to him. "The three branches represent three days.

13 In three more days Pharaoh will reinstate you and restore you to your office. You will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you did before when you were cupbearer.

14 But remember me when it goes well for you, and show me kindness.

Make mention of me to Pharaoh and bring me out of this prison,

15 for I really was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews and I have done nothing wrong here for which they should put me in a dungeon."

16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation of the first dream was favorable, he said to Joseph, “I also appeared in my dream and there were three baskets of white bread on my head.

17 In the top basket there were baked goods of every kind for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them from the basket that was on my head.”

18 Joseph replied, “This is its meaning: The three baskets represent three days.

19 In three more days Pharaoh will decapitate you and impale you on a pole. Then the birds will eat your flesh from you.”

20 On the third day it was Pharaoh’s birthday, so he gave a feast for all his servants. He “lifted up” the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker in the midst of his servants.

21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his former position so that he placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand,

22 but the chief baker he impaled, just as Joseph had predicted.

23 But the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph—he forgot him.

Genesis 41:1-16

1 At the end of two full years Pharaoh had a dream. As he was standing by the Nile,

2 seven fine-looking, fat cows were coming up out of the Nile, and they grazed in the reeds.

3 Then seven bad-looking, thin cows were coming up after them from the Nile, and they stood beside the other cows at the edge of the river.

4 The bad-looking, thin cows ate the seven fine-looking, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

5 Then he fell asleep again and had a second dream: There were seven heads of grain growing on one stalk, healthy and good.

6 Then seven heads of grain, thin and burned by the east wind, were sprouting up after them.

7 The thin heads swallowed up the seven healthy and full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up and realized it was a dream.

8 In the morning he was troubled, so he called for all the diviner-priests of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

9 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “Today I recall my failures.

10 Pharaoh was enraged with his servants, and he put me in prison in the house of the captain of the guards—me and the chief baker.

11 We each had a dream one night; each of us had a dream with its own meaning.

12 Now a young man, a Hebrew, a servant of the captain of the guards, was with us there. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted the meaning of each of our respective dreams for us.

13 It happened just as he had said to us—Pharaoh restored me to my office, but he impaled the baker.”

14 Then Pharaoh summoned Joseph. So they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; he shaved himself, changed his clothes, and came before Pharaoh.

15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard about you, that you can interpret dreams.”

16 Joseph replied to Pharaoh, “It is not within my power, but God will speak concerning the welfare of Pharaoh.”

Genesis 50:15-21

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph bears a grudge and wants to repay us in full for all the harm we did to him?"

16 So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave these instructions before he died:

17 'Tell Joseph this: Please forgive the sin of your brothers and the wrong they did when they treated you so badly.' Now please forgive the sin of the servants of the God of your father." When this message was reported to him, Joseph wept.

18 Then his brothers also came and threw themselves down before him; they said, "Here we are; we are your slaves."

19 But Joseph answered them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?"

20 As for you, you meant to harm me, but God intended it for a good purpose, so he could preserve the lives of many people, as you can see this day.

21 So now, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your little children." Then he consoled them and spoke kindly to them.

The words of the hymn, "***Come Down, O Love Divine,***" were written in the fifteenth century by **Bianco of Siena**. They were translated from Italian to English by **Richard F. Littledale** in 1867. The hymn beautifully encapsulates the means, process and effects of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

I am of the opinion that we may have difficulty understanding the original lyrics. I have therefore taken the liberty to "meddle" with the lyrics in an attempt to make the hymn more meaningful to us. So, after each verse, I have provided a rephrasing.

*1 Come down, O love divine, seek Thou this soul of mine,
And visit it with Thine Own ardor glowing
O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,
And kindle it, Thy holy flame bestowing.*

[O God, let Your divine love come down and pursue me. Visit my soul with Your Own burning intensity. Set my heart ablaze with Your holy fire].

*2 O let it freely burn, Till earthly passions turn
To dust and ashes In its heat consuming
And let Thy glorious light shine ever on my sight,
And clothe me round, the while my path illuming*

[Let Your holy fire burn without restraint in my heart, to the point where my earthly desires are consumed to dust and ashes in its heat. Let Your glorious light surround me completely like a garment, and at the same time, let it shine brightly, lighting up the path that I am taking].

*3 Let holy charity mine Outward vesture be,
And lowliness become Mine inner clothing
True lowliness of heart, which takes the humbler part,
And o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.*

[Let me be clothed outwardly with a holy love, and inwardly with humility; a genuine humility which always takes the lowest place, and produces an intense hatred for sin and self that manifests itself in utter brokenness whenever I yield to temptation].

*4 And so the yearning strong, with which the soul will long,
Shall far outpass the power of human telling;
For none can guess its grace, till he become the place
Wherein the Holy Spirit makes His dwelling.*

[When this happens, my soul will desire You with a passion that will be too overwhelming to describe. In fact the only way that anybody will ever be able to understand what I am experiencing, is if the indwelling Holy Spirit settles down and feels completely at home in their hearts as He does in mine! And this is only possible because of Your grace.]

1 Samuel 16:1-13

1 The LORD said to Samuel, “How long do you intend to mourn for Saul? I have rejected him as king over Israel. Fill your horn with olive oil and go. I am sending you to Jesse in Bethlehem, for I have selected a king for myself from among his sons.”

2 Samuel replied, “How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me!” But the LORD said, “Take a heifer with you^[e] and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’

3 Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you should do. You will anoint for me the one I point out to you.”

4 Samuel did what the LORD told him. When he arrived in Bethlehem, the elders of the city were afraid to meet him. They said, “Do you come in peace?”

5 He replied, “Yes, in peace. I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” So he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 When they arrived, Samuel noticed Eliab and said to himself, “Surely, here before the LORD stands his chosen king.”

7 But the LORD said to Samuel, “Don’t be impressed by his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. God does not view things the way people do. People look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and presented him to Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.”

9 Then Jesse presented Shammah. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.”

10 Jesse presented seven of his sons to Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen any of these.”

11 Then Samuel asked Jesse, “Is that all the young men?” Jesse replied, “There is still the youngest one, but he’s taking care of the flock.” Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and get him, for we cannot turn our attention to other things until he comes here.”

12 So Jesse had him brought in. Now he was ruddy, with attractive eyes and a handsome appearance. The LORD said, “Go and anoint him. This is the one.”

13 So Samuel took the horn full of olive oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers. The Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day onward. Then Samuel got up and went to Ramah.

1 Samuel 17:13-37

13 Jesse’s three oldest sons had followed Saul to war. The names of the three sons who went to war were Eliab, his firstborn, Abinadab, the second oldest; and Shammah, the third oldest.

14 Now David was the youngest. While the three oldest sons followed Saul,

15 David was going back and forth from Saul in order to care for his father’s sheep in Bethlehem.

16 Meanwhile for forty days the Philistine approached every morning and evening and took his position.

17 Jesse said to his son David, “Take your brothers this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread; go quickly to the camp to your brothers.

18 Also take these ten portions of cheese to their commanding officer. Find out how your brothers are doing and bring back their pledge that they received the goods.

19 They are with Saul and the whole Israelite army in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.”

20 So David got up early in the morning and entrusted the flock to someone else who would watch over it. After loading up, he went just as Jesse had instructed him. He arrived at the camp as the army was going out to the battle lines shouting its battle cry.

21 Israel and the Philistines drew up their battle lines opposite one another.

22 After David had entrusted his cargo to the care of the supply officer, he ran to the battlefront. When he arrived, he asked his brothers how they were doing.

23 As he was speaking with them, the champion named Goliath, the Philistine from Gath, was coming up from the battle lines of the Philistines. He spoke the way he usually did, and David heard it.

24 When all the men of Israel saw this man, they retreated from his presence and were very afraid.

25 The men of Israel said, “Have you seen this man who is coming up? He does so to defy Israel. But the king will make the man who can strike him down very wealthy! He will give him his daughter in marriage, and he will make his father’s house exempt from tax obligations in Israel.”

26 David asked the men who were standing near him, “What will be done for the man who strikes down this Philistine and frees Israel from

this humiliation? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he defies the armies of the living God?"

27 The soldiers told him what had been promised, saying, "This is what will be done for the man who can strike him down."

28 When David's oldest brother Eliab heard him speaking to the men, he became angry with David and said, "Why have you come down here? To whom did you entrust those few sheep in the wilderness? I am familiar with your pride and deceit! You have come down here to watch the battle."

29 David replied, "What have I done now? Can't I say anything?"

30 Then he turned from those who were nearby to someone else and asked the same question, but they gave him the same answer as before.

31 When David's words were overheard and reported to Saul, he called for him.

32 David said to Saul, "Don't let anyone be discouraged. Your servant will go and fight this Philistine!"

33 But Saul replied to David, "You aren't able to go against this Philistine and fight him. You're just a boy! He has been a warrior from his youth."

34 David replied to Saul, "Your servant has been a shepherd for his father's flock. Whenever a lion or bear would come and carry off a sheep from the flock,

35 I would go out after it, strike it down, and rescue the sheep from its mouth. If it rose up against me, I would grab it by its jaw, strike it, and kill it.

36 Your servant has struck down both the lion and the bear. This uncircumcised Philistine will be just like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.”

37 David went on to say, “The LORD who delivered me from the lion and the bear will also deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” Then Saul said to David, “Go! The LORD will be with you.”