

**Date:** August 28, 2022

**Sermon Series:** *One In Christ*

**Sermon Title:** *Who's the Boss?*

**Scripture:** Ephesians 6:1–9

**Preacher:** Kevin Freeman

---

In a section about "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ," Paul moves to two of the toughest relationships for obeying this command: the child-parent relationship and the employee-employer relationship. These verses help us order authority-based relationships in a way that honors God.

---

## Introduction



W. B. Riley used to tell the story of a man who had walked the streets of Philadelphia searching for employment. One day he happened to go into the office of a well-known businessman by the name of Girard. When he asked for a job, Mr. Girard answered, "Yes, I can give you work. See that pile of bricks out there? Carry them over to the other end of the yard and stack them up."

By nightfall the man reported that the project was completed and received his pay. When asked if there would be more work the next day, his employer said, "Yes, come in tomorrow and carry those same bricks back to where you found them." The following morning he came in early and got busy without a word. For more than a week he was instructed to carry bricks back and forth until it was evident that he could be trusted to do exactly what he was told. Then he was given a new and bigger responsibility—to go downtown and bid on a large quantity of sugar. Not recognizing him, the people at the auction were surprised by the bid of this total stranger. When it was accepted, the auctioneer asked who would pay the bill. "Mr. Girard," the man replied. "I am his agent." He had earned this position by being faithful in a menial task.

—Our Daily Bread

Obedience to authority develops trust.

Seems easy, like a simple task of stacking bricks, but doing it is difficult

Tend to distrust authority, or those in authority tend to disregard underlings

"One very common error misleads the opinion of mankind—that authority is pleasant and submission painful. In the general course of human affairs the very reverse of this is nearer the truth. Command is anxiety; obedience is ease."  
— William Paley

"One very common error misleads the opinion of mankind—that authority is pleasant and submission painful. In the general course of human affairs the very reverse of this is nearer the truth. Command is anxiety; obedience is ease." - William Paley

Could be that in whatever position you are in, the other is preferred

Can our faith in Christ fix relationship issues?

Problems in the home, at work

Those in charge seem unqualified - least competent promoted?

Current series is “One in Christ” - Ephesians is written to show the unity that can be found, even within power imbalance.

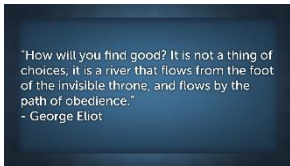
The world has nothing to contribute to this - power imbalances are generally viewed negatively

The world is not wrong - we see these problems

That’s why we must understand we are called to be different

Healthy authority-based relationships both reflect and encourage a healthy relationship with God.

That relationship with God is the source of our own spiritual vitality, how we see God’s power at work

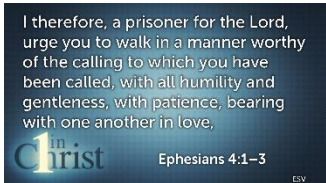


George Eliot asks and answers a question.

“How will you find good? It is not a thing of choices; it is a river that flows from the foot of the invisible throne, and flows by the path of obedience.” - George Eliot

The hinge in Ephesians: Eph 4:1-3

### **Ephesians 4:1-3 ESV**



<sup>1</sup> I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Our passage today helps us understand how to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called.

It also continues the concept of submission from Eph 5:21



### **Ephesians 5:21 ESV**

<sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

### **Ephesians 6:1-9 ESV**



<sup>1</sup> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup> “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” <sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. <sup>5</sup> Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, <sup>6</sup> not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of

God from the heart, <sup>7</sup> rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, <sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. <sup>9</sup> Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Why does our conduct in these relationships matter?

Because our relationship with God matters

How can you rebel against authority without rebelling against divine authority?

Or how can you mistreat those under your authority without marring the divine authority you represent?



## Submit to authority as to Christ.

Submitting to authority means accepting the rules of others where they oversee you.

Hard to do!

We all have authority we must submit to: federal, state, & local law; police officers; store managers; private institutions; church leadership; school authority

Much distrust of authority exists, but authority is not bad.

Civilization is built upon institutions and expectations of roles - we put extensive trust in others for much of what we do.

But there are areas where respecting authority is very hard.

Two such areas in our passage: parent-child relationships and employer-employee relationships

Bondservants - not advocating slavery or equating slavery with employees. Our closest parallel is when performing tasks under someone else.

Outlandish to address slaves here, because they were considered property

Both children and slaves are called to obey.

Children obey "in the Lord" - meaning as Christians

Slaves are to obey earthly lords - same word, *kurios*, as they would Christ

"fear and trembling"? *phobos* - used in Eph 5:21 (φόβος) and Eph 5:33 (φοβέω, verb form)

Wide range of meaning, from respect to reverence, from awe to fear

Note the source of the fear. In the Roman world, the lords ruled slaves through fear, but the fear is of Jesus

### **Ephesians 5:33** ESV

<sup>33</sup> However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

### **Ephesians 5:21** ESV

<sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

When you serve, you ultimately aren't serving man. You're serving God.

Authority doesn't have to be right in order for you to submit.

Takes the guesswork out for us

The decision tree is simple

Is this person in authority over me? YES

Does the action go against God's rules? NO

Then you should do it. It might be odd or senseless or absurd, but if it isn't wrong or unethical then you get to submit and do it

General Montgomery, a professed Christian, has often revealed basic principles of obedience which should govern us as people under the great Captain of our salvation. When he came into command in North Africa, to rescue the allied forces from that dreadful debacle, General Montgomery expected his commands to be carried out. He says, "Orders no longer formed the basis for discussion, but for action.... Previously orders had generally been queried by subordinates right down the line. I was determined to stop this state of affairs at once."

General Montgomery uncovered the cause for the lost battles in Africa.

—Prairie Overcomer

Faith in Christ reaches to the granular level. It informs how to handle when it feels like your parents are nagging you or when you sense that your supervisor has it in for you.

Great day for retired empty nesters!

Need your example - you've been there

You're still there

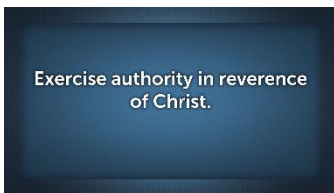
"That's children. They disobey."

Same God is over each of us - all called to obey.

Tell us about it!

GG - share what you believe God is telling you to do.

Unsure? Ask Him.

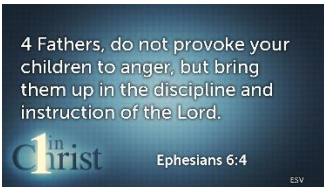


## Exercise authority in reverence of Christ.

Okay parents. It's your turn.

Kids, look at parents, tell them, now relax and sit back for a bit

**Ephesians 6:4** ESV



<sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Mothers? You're included

Emphasis on fathers to take lead

Don't you want it that way? Makes your own role as mom easier

Do not provoke your children to anger

How many as kids have been provoked to anger?

Adult this week asked for prayer because his father was coming to town - wanted patience.

Parents, we can provoke, right?

Active provoking - consistent fault-finding

Like a plane in a nosedive - "Pull up, pull up!"

In a bad mood, I can find fault all the time

Passive provoking - spiritual neglect

Victims of neglect often have anger issues. Their needs haven't been provided for.

Legally caring for your children - no legal neglect (State, CPS, neighbors)

Might not miss a ballgame or recital, might have family night without fail, college savings plan in place

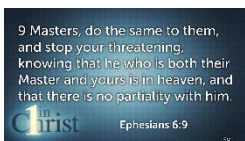
What does God say?

Lead them.

Regular family devotions, discussions about God's Word, training toward godliness.

Parents can actively provoke their children to anger through fault-finding or passively provoke them through spiritual neglect.

### **Ephesians 6:9** ESV



<sup>9</sup> Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Do the same - do what?

Perform your role as one who serves God - please God and not man

Often in a dual role - have both subordinates and supervisors - can feel like a conflict of interest — if serving to please God, easier to cut through the conflict

Seek to benefit those under you.

Stop your threatening

Fear-based leadership doesn't work.

Can still have expectations and consequences, but also grace and priority of relationship

Warren Wiersbe writes about this:

A friend of mine was promoted to a place of executive leadership and unfortunately, it went to his head. He enjoyed all of his executive privileges and more, and never lost an opportunity to remind his employees who was in charge. But he lost the respect of his workers, and production and efficiency went down so fast that the board had to replace him. Because my friend forgot that he had a "Master in heaven," he failed to be a good "master on earth."

Remember - your Master is watching

You are fellow servants

Serving over others with the right mindset helps both you and them better perform your tasks to God's glory

A youth leader once learned this lesson

Led 35 HS students at camp for people with all sorts of disabilities

Decided to throw them a big party - party hats, confetti, balloon popping, other party materials that leave a mess

To help with cleanup, youth leader challenged everyone to bend down and pick up a handful of trash and throw away.

Then it happened - blind teenage girl spent time crawling on the ground looking for handfuls of trash.

Youth leader was both inspired and ashamed

In awe at this girl's desire to serve and obey

Ashamed because he only gave out the orders but was not himself cleaning.

Masters and servants - employers/employees - however you put it - both influence one another.

Sensitivity to the importance and delicateness of these roles will help you see ways to lead well.

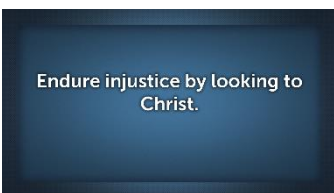
Wish I could say it always works that way.

Some people are hardened and do not lead well

No amount of examples will help

Some parents are like this, too

What about injustice?



Endure injustice by looking to Christ.

What about injustice?

overbearing parents

parents who are not faithfully guiding you to develop habits that help you follow God?

oppressed at work, put down, unappreciated

It's okay to get out of a bad situation.

Don't need to live with oppressive parents until 37

Don't need to stay in an awful job if you don't have to

Paul recommending getting out of slavery if possible (1 Cor 7:21)

Paul practically freed Onesimus and wrote to Philemon to formalize the release of his former slave

But if you're stuck...

...in an awful home environment

...in an awful work setting

...your faith in God is at stake

Do you trust God?

Sovereign

Ch 1 chose you before the foundation of the world

Creator of all - not one maverick molecule (RC Sproul)

Jesus is in all things and in Him all things consist

Ch 1, the church is the "fullness of him who fills all in all."

Do you think God made a mistake by placing you in your situation?

Want to rebel against cruelty

See that person as over you by God's design

It's okay to get out of a bad situation if you are able to, but if you're stuck, do you trust God, who placed you there?

Christian in an unstable country prayed

God help me have an impact for you

Car bomb went off near him - prime suspect - wrongfully imprisoned

in prison he developed a congregation - led people to faith & strengthened believers

God has you where He has you for a reason.

## Conclusion

We are all called to obedience and submission.

Life is a study in obedience.

Obedying parents, employers, others - helps teach to obey God

Darlene Rose - born in Iowa in 1917

10 years old: committed to missionary service. Felt hand on shoulder, voice: "Would you go anywhere for Me no matter what the cost?" YES

By age 21 - first wedding anniversary - landed in Java with husband

Served for a few years but became POWs after Pearl Harbor attack

Taken to mountains - men beaten and taken from women and children - never saw husband again

Maintained faith in Christ and in God's plan

Quarantined to remote complex of shacks on side of mountain - too remote to do anything but stay there

Repeated bombings of their barracks

Often buried the dead on the side of the mountain the next day.

Each had a hiding place in the earth to escape the bombs

Once Darlene went to her spot to escape bombs but heard God's voice tell her to retrieve a friend's Bible from inside the home.

She obeyed - raid finished before she left the home

Next morning saw a friend sleeping on the floor

Friend had tried saving her mattress - threw it over the spot Darlene hid from the bombs - had been destroyed

Obedience had saved her life

Marauding men of the Bogus tribe were in the area - known for plundering dwellings and abusing the women

One night a Bogus man was in her hallway

Tiny Darlene chased him out

The man gathered other Bogus men who only stayed outside - night after night

Years later Darlene met a converted Bogus man who had become a missionary

Man explained they would have attacked the women but didn't "Because of all of those people in white who stood guard around your house night after night after night."

Obedience keeps us connected to God's supernatural power

w/o it we decline God's offer and take up our own plan

Darlene thought she had her own plan after eventual rescue - decided to leave and never return

Converted believers gathered on the shore to sing "God be with you till we meet again!"

Sensed God's call had not ceased

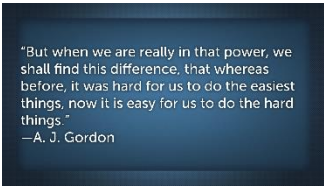
Returned a few years later and stayed for 40 years



The obedient life has more twists and turns, but it relies on God's power and witnesses far greater evidence of that power.

Do you long for that? Tired of hearing about it and want to experience it firsthand?

Opening ch of Eph - Paul prays that we would "know...what is the immeasurable greatness of [God's] power toward us who believe."



"It costs much to obtain the power of the Spirit. It costs self-surrender and humiliation, and a yielding up of our most precious things to God. It costs the perseverance of long waiting, and the faith of strong trust." But when we are really in that power, we shall find this difference, that whereas before, it was hard for us to do the easiest things, now it is easy for us to do the hard things."—A. J. Gordon

## Invitation



- Renewal to full obedience
- Maybe to parent or supervisor
- Maybe to responding to God's call
- Join our church - place faith in Christ - decide to get baptized and labeled as

one who obeys God