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C0514 -- Apr. 06, 2005 – Ephesians 5:22-6:9 – Divine Institutions

Last week we looked at Eph 5:21, Submitting to One Another In the Church. Submission (*hupotasso*) means “to rank yourself under a leader”. The submission is mutual submission. I submit to you and you submit to me. But how does mutual submission work? The problem is this: if A submits to B then B is not submitting to A but ruling. So, how does mutual submission work? The answer lies in the fact that each of us is to submit to the one’s we are supposed to submit to. Within the church there is equality in Christ but there are also lines of authority. For example, elders and deacons hold offices of authority in the church. The flock is to submit to these leaders according to Heb 13:17 (*hupakouo* – literally “obey” or “follow”). At the same time these leaders have to qualify for their office (1 Tim 3) and they have to rule with responsibility and leadership (1 Pt 5:1-3). Additionally, younger women are to submit to older women and the older women are to teach the younger women (Tit 2). Also, younger men are to submit to the elders and wait for God to exalt them (1 Pt 5:4-5). So, you can see that the Bible does not think that equality and submission contradict one another and are mutually exclusive. Instead the two fit together perfectly.

However, in 21st century America equality and submission are under attack. The tug of the culture, particularly from the feminist movement, revitalized in the 1960’s with Friedan’s book *The Feminine Mystique*, has led many Christians down a devastating trek. Culturally, new “politically correct” terms have taken the place of old terms (e.g. “waiter” and “waitress” are no longer appropriate because they distinguish gender. Instead the single word “server” is more politically correct). At any department store you can buy unisex clothing, unisex perfume (e.g. Calvin Klein “One”), and individuals are opting for hairstyles that confuse gender distinctions. The culture has gone mad with erasing gender distinctions. These changes may seem subtle to you but they

reflect a huge change in the thinking of America. These changes have not been limited to the secular culture. Many Christian feminists (male and female) have attempted several strategies to erase gender distinctions in the Bible. One strategy is to create gender neutral translations of the Bible such as the TNIV. The idea is to get rid of that ancient Patriarchal culture that the Bible was written in and modernize it to keep up with the times. Incidentally, this causes gross doctrinal problems and disparages the inspiration of Scripture. A second strategy is to re-interpret biblical passages in order to support their secular beliefs. At the center of this debate is Galatians 3:28. You'll want to turn there now. This strategy of re-interpreting the Bible in light of present cultural norms is called Accommodation. We accommodate the culture by re-interpreting the Bible. Christian evolutionists have been trying to do this with Genesis 1-11 for about 150 years and some are still trying to do this. But you can't do it. We can't go on forever re-interpreting the Bible to fit the ever-changing beliefs of secular culture. We have to trust the word of God and take it at face value whether it's "politically correct" or not! What the re-interpreter is really doing is desecrating the word of God. He wants to play the rubber Bible game. Pull it out of context and twist it any which way to get it to make it fit his biased agenda.

Equality

Galatians 3:28 is at the center of this debate. This passage supposedly erases all gender and cultural distinctions.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

If there is no such thing as male-female distinctions in Christ Jesus then how can we say that only males can hold the office of elder? Shouldn't anyone who is "in Christ" be able to hold the office of elder? Many say "yes, anyone in Christ can be an elder because we're all one in Christ Jesus." Paul, they say, was simply accommodating to the 1st century patriarchal culture and so we too must accommodate to our unisex culture. Therefore, anyone in Christ can be an elder or deacon. Well, let's back up and see what the context is.

Galatians 3:24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us to* Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

The context is justification by faith. In terms of how one is justified there are no distinctions. Paul is not erasing all distinctions between these classes. Paul is saying it doesn't matter what race you are, what your social status is, or what your sex is all are justified by faith. Distinctions still exist in other areas.

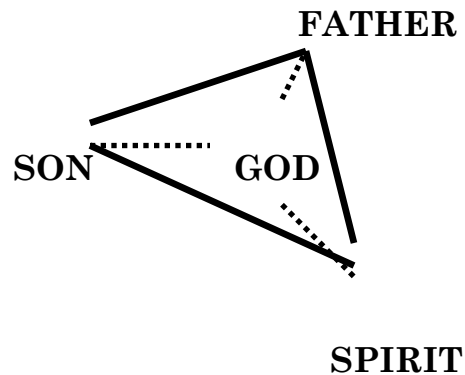
For example, let's take Jews and Gentiles. Paul still considered himself a Jew even after becoming a Christian (Rom 9:3-4). **Romans 9:3-4** *"For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites,"*. Physically Paul was still a Jew. Spiritually Paul was a Christian. But Paul's spiritual status did not erase his physical status as a Jew.

For example, let's take males and females and marriage. If all distinctions were erased then we must also say that there are no distinctions between male and female. This would mean that any Christian could marry any other Christian. That means homosexual Christian marriage would be legitimate. But homosexual marriage is the judgment of God according to Romans 1:26-27. So, Galatians 3:28 can't be abused this way. It does not erase all distinctions.

How do we reconcile Equality with Subordination?

While we are equal in the body of Christ the Bible also teaches subordination of role within the body of Christ. "For example, all citizens of a country are equal but there are also many different ranks in the power structure of the country. It does not mean that those in authority are better citizens of the country than those whom they rule."¹ In the church there is equality in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female (Gal 3:28). But there are also positions of authority in the Church (e.g. elders and deacons) as well as subordinate roles (e.g. flock submit to leaders, younger women submit to older women, younger men submit to older men, children obey parents, wives submit to husbands).

The most striking example of equality and subordination is the Triune God. All three persons of God are equal yet the Son is subordinate to the Father and the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son.



Subordination of role does not mean subordination of essence. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God but the Son and the Spirit take on subordinate roles. This does not change the essence of God in any way, shape or means. God's essence is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Thus, there is *equality of essence* among the persons of the Trinity but a *willing subordination of role* among the persons. If equality and subordination are in the Trinity then they can't be contradictory. Just as there is unity and diversity in the Trinity it should not be surprising that we find unity and diversity in the Church (Eph 4:1-6 = unity; Eph 4:7-16 = diversity). Therefore, there is equality of essence among believers in Jesus Christ but subordination of roles among us. Some hold offices, some do not, some are men, some are women, some are older, some are younger. The crucial thing is that all are essential (Eph 4:16). Understanding equality and subordination is fundamental to understanding the relationships in marriage, family and the workplace.

Two Major Points

- 1) Equality does not contradict subordination (e.g. Trinity)
- 2) Subordination results when you surrender your will to the Lord's will (i.e. be filled by the Holy Spirit)

Submission/subordination to one another is not to be taken lightly but is to be done **in the fear of Christ**. **the fear of Christ** is the motivation for submitting to one another. The word **fear** is *phobos* and it can mean outright "terror", something that sends you running or it can mean "respect". "Respect"

is not strong enough here and “terror” is too strong. *phobos* in this context is a mixture of being in “terror of Christ and respecting Christ”, somewhere in between those extremes. Being in **fear of Christ** motivates believers to be filled by the Spirit with the result that he submits to others in the body of Christ.

This verse is the hinge verse as we move into three applications of walking in wisdom in 5:22-6:9. The reason this verse is the hinge is because submission to one another is the key in every relationship that follows. IF WE DON'T LEARN that submission depends absolutely on being filled by the Spirit then we will never learn to submit to those who have authority over us. Wives will not submit to their husbands if they don't learn that the way to do that is by being filled by the Holy Spirit. Children will not obey their parents if they are not taught that the way to do that is by being filled by the Holy Spirit. Employees will not work honorably for their boss' if they are not taught that the way to do it is by being filled by the Holy Spirit. Being filled by the Spirit is therefore the key to the first three Divine Institutions: Labor, Marriage, and Family.

As we embark on the application of being filled by the Spirit to the 1st three Divine Institutions a short treatment of each is an absolute necessity. These absolute social structures are under attack on every front in America. As Machiavelli said in 1519, “*As the observance of divine institutions is the cause of the greatness of republics, so the disregard of them produces their ruin...*”

As per Marriage, the radical feminists of the 60's were not just seeking equality, they sought a radical restructuring of society and have succeeded to a large degree by way radical policy making on the heels of the civil rights movement. The recent attempt of the Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA) is just a last minute stab at a war that was lost decades ago. Christians didn't even see that the real problem was the massive upsurge of the religion of humanism, primarily through the public education system that has engulfed America. Few Christians recognized it and even fewer were trained to confront the attack. Today it is too late to undo what has already been done. The result: *young Christian men and women don't have a clue what biblical marriage looks like.* We've been raised in a humanist culture with role confusion; weak, pudgy, irresponsible fathers and bold, arrogant, outspoken wives.

In the Family arena, our children have been moved from the basic structure of the traditional heterosexual family into any and every kind of arrangement. Non-traditional homosexual or disfigured families, that don't qualify as families at all, as well as a public education system that has embraced the religion of humanism and pawned it off as a neutral approach to life, all the while indoctrinating our children with anti-Christian agendas and stealing parental rights.

Lastly, in antagonism to the Divine Institution of Labor, we have lazy workers and those who don't work and are supported by the welfare system in America. These people have scorned the importance and value of a hard-days work and earning one's own wage.

I'd say the Divine Institutions revealed in God's word have been and are under attack and yet it amazes me that I hear very little from Christians about restoring and preserving these absolute social structures. Instead we turn the cheek to the rapid deterioration of our nation. I can assure you our nation will not collapse due to a weak military but due to inward decay of depraved individuals. America is already crumbling and will ultimately collapse as one among hundreds of nations that have followed the same path.

Before we can even discuss Paul's instructions for wives-husbands, children-fathers, and slaves-masters we need to realize that Paul's three groups of application did not come in a vacuum. Paul was a Jewish theologian and he was making direct application to these three Divine Institutions that were given at creation.

DIVINE INSTITUTIONS

What is a divine institution? A divine institution is an absolute social structure instituted by God for the entire human race—believers and unbelievers. Three of these were instituted at Creation and these three are the one's Paul touches here in chapter 5 of Ephesians: 1) Responsible Dominion or Labor, 2) Marriage, and 3) Family. These three social structures are not mere conventions of society which can be re-defined by the will of a democracy, anarchy, or totalitarian political system. When a society or individual tampers with one of these three absolute structures, the results are devastating. God has divinely

instituted these structures and when we break these structures the result is poverty, crime, disease, and death.

DIVINE INSTITUTION #1: LABOR

Tonight let's look at the first divine institution of Responsible Dominion or Labor because the second divine institution of Marriage is defined in terms of it. If you don't understand Labor then you will never be able to understand marriage or Christ and the Church since they are both defined in terms of Labor. Turn to **Genesis 1:26-28**. Genesis 1, if you are unaware, is a summary of the Creation of the Universe in 6 days. Genesis 2 is an amplification of the 6th day, the Creation of Man. So, here we have the general account of man's creation. I want you to ask yourself as we read this. What is the overriding purpose of man? What is the overriding purpose of man?

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

What is the overriding theme or purpose of man? (Wait for answer). The overriding purpose of man is to "rule creation". We are to rule over the animal kingdom. We are to multiply in number and fill the earth so that we can subdue it and rule over the entire creation. Man's purpose is to "rule creation". That is why God created man. God created man to be a "responsible ruler" or "laborer" over creation. And thus we have the 1st Divine Institution: Responsible Labor or Dominion. Now turn over to **Genesis 2:15**

¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden [why did God put Adam in the Garden of Eden? What does the text say? He was put there...] to cultivate it and keep it.

Once again, Labor is man's purpose. This is why after the Fall what does God curse in relation to Adam (Gen 3:17ff)? Labor! Now labor is going to be much

more difficult. Interestingly, labor was not something introduced *because* of the Fall.

So, God created the earth and man was placed as the manager over it under God's authority. The first picture we have of God in the Bible is as a Laborer. God labors for 6 days to create the heavens and earth and when He finishes each day He evaluates it and enjoys it (it was good or very good). In a similar way God brought animals before Adam to see what he would call them. God let Adam investigate and create names for the animals. So, God is the Creator and Lord of creation and man was created to be the under "lord" or "manager" of creation under God's authority. It is in this context of Responsible Labor or Dominion that Marriage and Family have meaning.

FAMILY

MARRIAGE

LABOR

DIVINE INSTITUTION #2: MARRIAGE

Both Marriage and Family are defined in terms of Labor. "Unlike animals, mankind's so-called sexual differentiation is not merely for procreation; it is also for dominion."ⁱⁱ Turn to **Genesis 2:15** "*Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.*" Notice, the man was given labor, a life-task for which he was responsible **BEFORE** the woman was brought to him (Gen 2:22). This is significant because once a man knows his God-given labor then he can recognize his wife. After God gave the man a task then and only then did He bring the woman to the man. Why was the woman brought to Adam?

Genesis 2:18 ¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper [ezer] suitable for him."

The woman was made and brought to the man in order to be “a helper suitable for him”. The woman’s role as the man’s helper is not a demeaning, secondary role. The word “helper” is used elsewhere of God Himself (Exod 18:4; Dt 33:7). Interestingly, the image of God can only be expressed when man and woman are united as “one flesh”. Together, man and woman express the image of God (Gen 1:27) so that together they can subdue it. God has characteristics that are masculine and feminine (e.g. God is a laborer (masc) and God is a helper (fem) (Exod 18:4; Dt 33:7; Gen 2:18)). Distinct roles for man and wife in marriage do not detract from their equality of essence but rather complete it! Man should not be alone! Rather he should be with a woman who can help him complete His calling as they together express the divine image and fulfill the 1st divine institution of Responsible Dominion! Marriage is the chief means of dominion in the New Testament. The man-woman distinction typifies the Christ-Church distinction (Eph 5:22-32) in which the Church completes Christ in His calling just as the woman completes the man in his calling!

DIVINE INSTITUTION #3: FAMILY

Lastly we have the Divine Institution of Family. Family is built on the 1st and 2nd Divine Institutions. Marriage normally leads to dominion through a family. Family is the basic unit of society. The basic unit of society IS NOT the individual, it is the family (property, for example, in the OT was entitled to the family, not individuals). Jesus Christ Himself was sent into the world in a family.

Notice the connection between marriage and family in Genesis 1:28. As population increases dominion should also increase. Marriage and family cannot be separated from DI #1 Responsible Labor. When Labor is perverted and the environment is ruined, starvation and poverty follow. When marriages are dishonored families are broken and society collapses. No amount of laws, governmental programs, or “re-defining” marriage and family can save the day. God designed the divine institutions to provide dominion and prosperity and no other arrangement can produce them.

The Family is the first school, first church, and first state. The family is the training ground. It is in the family that children first learn authority, love, and

responsibility. The child is to learn humility under authority—either willingly or enforced. To ensure the continuance of this function the Mosaic Law executed children who rebelled against their parents (Dt 21:18-21). A successful society depends upon successful families.

This family structure spills over from the Triune God, namely the Father and the Son. Humanist cultures try to erase these distinctions within families because it reminds him of God's character which he hates. Therefore he is out to destroy these divine institutions. He says marriage, family, and labor are just "social conventions" that evolved. They usually work best this way but we are free to change these conventions at will as we evolve. But this rebellious program self-destructs because God will not be mocked. Unavoidably disease, poverty, crime, and death result.

It is these three divine institutions that Paul narrows in on to apply the filling of the Holy Spirit. If we are to maintain these divine institutions as Christians we must know what they are and what they look like and we must learn to be filled by the Spirit. If we don't we will be guilty of not holding God's word high and we will miss the joy that comes in Labor, Marriage, and Family.

In conclusion let's make some applications for marriage from Genesis which will be built upon in Eph 5.

- 1) Man was created first
- 2) Man was given Responsible Labor
- 3) His Labor shapes his choice of wife
- 4) The wife is his needful helper (Gen 2:18) and his glory (1 Cor 11:7)
- 5) Man and wife are to separate from their own families and build a new Family (Gen 1:26-28; 2:24)
- 6) Only in a new separate family (in contrast to an extended family) does a young man have to face full leadership responsibility under God (Gen 2:24)

Now, from this picture you can see how different God views marriage, men and women. The typical TV husband is pictured as a dumb, comical, father-fool or an adventurous, unmarried gun-slinger, both of which emphasize male immaturity and irresponsibility. The Bible stresses the opposite; maturity and responsibility.

ⁱ Hoehner, 726.

ⁱⁱ Clough, Charles, Framework, 40.

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