

The Way of the Lord

29. Deference Reflects the Lordship of Jesus

Are YOU the one who's in control of your life, or is Lord Jesus? Really, does your frame of reference about Jesus center on what *He does for you*? Or, do you see yourself from *His* perspective: *He* is the trustworthy King of the glorious Kingdom in which *you* are His beloved slave to *do His Father's will*.

Your answer to these questions reveals a lot about your view of biblical authority and deference, especially in regard to your heavenly Father and your position as His adopted child. The Bible commands a child to *honor* his or her parents (Ephesians 6:1-3) for the *position* God gives a father and mother. That honor is *independent* of what the parent *does* for the child. If a child honors his parents only for the good things they *do for him*, then he's evaluating them. He's standing in judgment of whether his parents meet *his* criteria of benefiting him. A child's idea of benefit generally means whether his parents have given him the things he *wants*. And that's an addictive, SELF-gratifying and SELF-absorbed motivation! If left unchecked, SELF pursuit will continue to dominate his life.

On the other hand, a child who honors his parents *regardless* of any benefits he's received from them reveals not only his loving trust in them but also a humble heart. Parents are truly honored by that kind of response in their child. When a child has a humble, grateful heart, he gladly obeys his parents because he *loves* them, and as a result will go through life seeking to serve others.

Let's translate this image into our relationship with our Lord Jesus. Is *He* the One you yearn to honor, or are *you* the object of your own desires? Our relationship with our Lord Jesus is certainly multifaceted, and most of us enjoy being called His friend, His sheep, His brother or sister. Those much-cherished positions depict a wonderful benefit to our lives! But how many of us have paused to consider the hundreds of times God's Word refers to Jesus followers as beloved *slaves* of our Master and Lord?

A slave lives to do his Master's will. That means you need to know *what* His will is! People who gratefully serve Jesus as their beloved and awesome Lord and King relate to Him out of devotion for *Who He is* rather than just for *what He does*. Armed with that kind of grateful love, they bear fruit for the King (see Mark 4:20) with a humble heart that hears and obeys His Spirit. They have no problem readily embracing an accurate Kingdom view of themselves: "*We are unworthy slaves, we have only done our duty*" (Luke 17:10).

One particular character quality is foundational to someone whose heart responds with humble obedient trust in Jesus as LORD of their life. That quality is *deference*.

- Deference is shown when you *avoid* choices and decisions that would offend those who have authority in your life.
- Deference causes you to fulfill your responsibilities with a *willing heart* rather than as a burden of obligation.
- Deference is linked with *humility*, giving honor and esteem to those who have a right to them.

The link which connects *deference* and *trust* shines vividly in an encounter Jesus had with a Gentile “outsider”, a Roman centurion. (See Matthew 8:5-10.) One day a centurion approached Jesus asking Him to heal his suffering servant. Jesus agreed to go to the man’s house, but the centurion responded with deep humility, saying he was *unworthy* for the Lord to set foot there.

Then the Roman *amazed* Jesus with an understanding of deference to authority that paralleled Jesus’s relationship with His Father. The centurion was a man who was both *under authority* himself and also *exercised authority*. This soldier *trusted* that Jesus submitted to His heavenly Father’s authority, and that He was therefore able to exercise supernatural authority Himself as well. Because of that kind of *deference which trusted*, the centurion was assured that Jesus’s promise to heal would be accomplished. And then Jesus shocked His Jewish listeners with this profound statement about the Roman soldier: “*I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great trust.*”

Deference is that heart motivation that causes you to *trust* in Jesus *as your LORD*, and to earnestly desire to do His will. If deference was that valued and commended by our Lord Jesus, then surely we need it in our lives too! And know that *without* deference, it’s impossible for any of us to walk in the way of our Lord.

For Further Study

- Lifebyte 9. *The Book of Daniel: Personal Responsibility—Deference—God-dependence*
- Teaching E-mail 50. *The Pearl of Great Price*

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