

Marc Roby: We are resuming our study of systematic theology today by continuing to examine biblical anthropology. Dr. Spencer, last time we pointed out that the biblical view of women is a high view – they are to be capable, strong, educated and wise people. But we then also introduced the idea that women are to be under authority. How do you want to proceed today?

Dr. Spencer: Well, I first want to say that men are to be under authority too. Every single human being alive is under authority, usually in multiple ways. We are all under God’s authority of course and, in addition, we are under authority in our society and in church, and most of us are also under authority at work as well. In addition, wives and children are under authority in the home.

Near the end of our last session we read 1 Corinthians 11:3, where the apostle Paul wrote, “Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”¹ And we noted that to be “the head” means to be in authority. We also noted that not every woman is under the authority of every man. Paul is simply giving the normal structure in a family here.

Marc Roby: I know that some have proposed that by head in this passage Paul is not referring to authority, but to the husband as the source of love and service.

Dr. Spencer: That idea has been stated by a number of commentators, but Wayne Grudem points out in his Systematic Theology that when an exhaustive search of ancient Greek literature was undertaken to determine how to interpret the word, not a single counter example was found in over 2,000 examples. In every single case, the person referred to as the head was the one in authority. That is also clear when you look at the other passages in the Bible relating to this topic. So there really isn’t any doubt that Paul intended head to refer to authority.

In Ephesians 5:22-24 Paul gave this command, “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”

Marc Roby: That isn’t a popular passage in the modern church.

Dr. Spencer: No, it isn’t. But it is a part of God’s word and we dare not ignore it. And note that the word head is used here as well. The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body. The head rules the body. That is the clear meaning of the term.

And then, immediately after these verses, Paul gives an even more difficult charge to men. In Verses 25-27 he commands husbands, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water

¹ All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® (1984 version). Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The "NIV" and "New International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™.

through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”

Marc Roby: That is a very serious charge. We are to love our wives *as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her!* I would much rather be told to simply obey.

Dr. Spencer: And so would I. Being a proper biblical leader is not an easy job. It does not mean that you decide everything in favor of what you want to do or that you lord your authority over others, or that they bow and scrape before you and pander to your every desire. A proper biblical leader must work hard to discern the will of God, to know what is going on with those under his authority, and to make the decision that is best for those under his authority, not himself.

Marc Roby: Certainly Christ’s decision to be crucified was not the best decision from the perspective of his immediate personal happiness.

Dr. Spencer: No, it obviously was not. We are told in Luke 22:42 that on the eve of his crucifixion Jesus was on the Mount of Olives and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”

Marc Roby: The cup of course referred to the cup of God’s wrath, which Jesus endured for the sake of his people.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, and what a terrible cup it was. And that is the standard given to us as husbands. We are to love our wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her! None of us succeed in doing that of course, but that is the standard. And Paul said more about the duties of the husband in the verses I read.

Marc Roby: Let me read those verses again in Ephesians 5:25-27. Paul wrote, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”

Dr. Spencer: We are to give our lives for a purpose. It is to make our wives holy. And we are to do it by “cleansing her by the washing with water through the word”, which refers to our responsibility to function as a prophet in our home. By prophet here I don’t mean foretelling the future, I simply mean one who speaks the word of God. We are to bring the Word of God to bear on each and every situation. In other words, we have no authority to do what we want to do. We only have authority to see to it that God’s will is done.

Marc Roby: And just as Christ said, “not my will, but yours be done.”

Dr. Spencer: Exactly. And doing that takes serious effort and self-sacrifice. It isn’t easy to be a good leader. And men, in their natural sinful state, rebel against God’s assigned role. Men don’t want to lead.

Marc Roby: And women don’t want to obey.

Dr. Spencer: And neither do children. Sin is universal. We are all rebels in our fallen nature. But when a person is saved, he or she will embrace God’s word and will begin to strive to live the

way God tells us to live. And that is for the man to be the head of his home and to rule for the good of his family. The wives are to submit to that rule and to help in ruling the children.

And, after dealing with husbands and wives in Ephesians 5, Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:1-3, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’—which is the first commandment with a promise—that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

Marc Roby: And in the very next verse Paul again gives instruction to fathers. He wrote in Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

Dr. Spencer: Notice that this, in a sense, is the same command given to men in regard to their wives. In both cases we are to turn to the Word of God for guidance. We are to be a prophet in our home. Our authority is given to us by God and must be used in accordance with his instruction. We have no freedom to go outside of that.

Marc Roby: And a wife is under no obligation to obey a command that is contrary to the Word of God. When the Jewish ruling council, the Sanhedrin, commanded the apostles to not preach the gospel anymore, they went on preaching. They were then arrested and taken before the Sanhedrin to account for their actions. We read in Acts 5:29 that “Peter and the other apostles replied: ‘We must obey God rather than men!’” And that principle applies to all delegated authorities; we must obey God if a delegated authority tells us to sin.

Dr. Spencer: You’re right. But we do need to be careful, because there are a lot of details not spoken of in the Bible. I don’t want to repeat a lot of what we covered before about authority, but as just one example, if I tell my children that they need to be in bed by 9 O’clock, that is a perfectly legitimate and proper command that they are duty-bound to obey, even though the Bible says nothing about what their bedtime should be.

Marc Roby: Yes, that’s true. And you’re right, we do need to stay focused on the topic at hand, which is what it means to be made male and female in the image of God.

Dr. Spencer: And the point I have been laboring to make in that regard is simply that there is an authority structure within the godhead that is to be mirrored in our human relationships. All of us are sinners and our natural tendency is to rebel against the Word of God. So we need to be aware of that tendency and fight against it.

Men must lead. Wives must submit to their husbands, and children must honor and obey their parents. Listeners who are interested in getting more detail about authority in the home can go to our website and listen to Sessions 28 through 30. But I think we’ve said all that needs to be said to establish that our functioning under authority is an important aspect of our being made in the image and likeness of God.

Marc Roby: And before we move on, perhaps we should again emphasize the equality that exists among God’s people. In Galatians 3:27-28 Paul wrote that “all of you who were baptized into

Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Dr. Spencer: That is a great thing to emphasize again. The fact that a policeman has authority over me in some situations, or that my boss has authority over me at work, in no way implies that they are superior human beings or that they are worth more in the sight of God than I am. Authority has nothing at all to do with our value as human beings. Just as the members of the Trinity are all ontologically equal, so are we all ontologically equal.

Marc Roby: Yes, that is a wonderful truth. All people are made in the image of God, whether they are on the lowest rung of a social ladder or they are kings, Nobel laureates or world-famous artists or musicians. But we are all under authority, which has been ordained by God for our good.

Dr. Spencer, what else do you want to say about being made in the image and likeness of God?

Dr. Spencer: That we are given dominion over the creatures. Going back to Genesis 1:26 we read that God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

Marc Roby: That rule is another example of authority.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, it is. God gave us authority to rule the animals and there is also a clear implication in Genesis 1 and 2 that we are given authority to use the material resources of the earth as well. But in all of this we must view ourselves as God’s representatives. All of creation belongs to God, not to us. And we must be good stewards of what he has entrusted to us. To pollute and ravage the land with no regard for the future would be sin. We should be responsible in our use of the resources God had given to us.

Marc Roby: Are we finished with talking about what it means to be made in the image of God?

Dr. Spencer: Not quite. We have, in a sense, the most important thing left to discuss.

Marc Roby: What is that?

Dr. Spencer: The fact that we have a spirit or soul. Let me quote from the theologian Charles Hodge. In his Systematic Theology he wrote, “The essential attributes of a spirit are reason, conscience, and will. A spirit is a rational, moral, and therefore also, a free agent. In making man after his own image, therefore, God endowed him with those attributes which belong to his own nature as a spirit. Man is thereby distinguished from all other inhabitants of this world, and raised immeasurably above them. He belongs to the same order of being as God Himself, and is therefore capable of communion with his Maker. This conformity of nature between man and God, is not only the distinguishing prerogative of humanity, so far as earthly creatures are

concerned, but it is also the necessary condition of our capacity to know God, and therefore the foundation of our religious nature.”²

Marc Roby: That makes me think of Genesis 2:7 where we read that “the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”

Dr. Spencer: That is a wonderful picture of the creation of man. It makes it clear that we have a material part, which came from the dust of the ground, and an immaterial part, that which makes us living beings.

Marc Roby: But there are differing views about the nature of man, even among Christians.

Dr. Spencer: That’s true, and that is what I want to take some time to consider next. Wayne Grudem does a good job of discussing this topic, which he calls the Essential Nature of Man, in Chapter 23 of his *Systematic Theology*.³

He points out that there have been three different views held by Christians over the years; monism, dichotomy and trichotomy. Monism is the belief that man is essentially made up of just one kind of substance. Dichotomy is the view that man is both body and soul, or spirit. In this view soul and spirit are assumed to be essentially synonymous. And finally, trichotomy is the view that man has a body, soul and spirit and these are three different, distinct things.

Marc Roby: It would seem that monism is the view that an atheist would have to take.

Dr. Spencer: I think that’s true. If you have a materialist worldview, as an atheist must, then the physical is all there is and so our physical bodies are all there is to us, and that is monism. There is nothing separating us from animals, or plants, or even rocks, except the sheer complexity of how all the physical elements are put together.

Marc Roby: That has always struck me as really a very silly view.

Dr. Spencer: It strikes most people that way. Even people who do not describe themselves as religious, or spiritual, let alone Christian, do not accept the idea that there is nothing else to being a human being but the purely physical. But even if you ignore the spirit or soul, the sheer complexity of living beings is way too great to be the result of purely blind natural processes. As I said way back in Session 1, I find atheism to be intellectually untenable in part because of the extreme complexity of living organisms, whether animals or people.

It is simply impossible for me to believe that they can arise by any natural process, and the mathematics shows that the probabilities are so tiny that having trillions and trillions of universes with trillions and trillions of livable planets that are trillions and trillions of years old wouldn’t even make a noticeable dent in the probability of producing a living being by natural processes.

² Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Eerdmans, 1997, Vol. II, pg. 97

³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Inter-Varsity Press, 1994

Marc Roby: And, even if you did create such a being, there is still the question of how you produce a self-aware, volitional being.

Dr. Spencer: That was another of my reasons for saying I think it is intellectually untenable to be an atheist. All physical laws are either purely deterministic, like the motions of billiard balls, or random. And no combination of randomness and determinism produces real volition. And yet, even atheistic philosophers and scientists have to admit that man appears to have the ability to make real choices; in other words, we have a free will.

Marc Roby: It would seem silly to deny such an obvious fact.

Dr. Spencer: Oh but they do deny it. Notice that I said they have to admit that man “appears” to have a free will. They simply agree that we must keep up the charade.

The late professor Marvin Minsky, a co-founder of MIT’s Artificial Intelligence laboratory, wrote that “Everything, including that which happens in our brains, depends on these and only on these: A set of fixed, deterministic laws. [and] A purely random set of accidents.”⁴ He goes on to explain that because this is so difficult for us to accept, “We imagine a third alternative ... called ‘freedom of will’”.⁵

And he then explains, “No matter that the physical world provides no room for freedom of will: that concept is essential to our models of the mental realm. ... We’re virtually forced to maintain that belief, even though we know it is false”.⁶

Marc Roby: Now that is strange. To be forced to maintain a belief that you know is false.

Dr. Spencer: I would say that it is a clear sign that your worldview has a serious problem. In this case, it is a clear sign that a materialistic worldview simply cannot account for free will. If we are truly just a very complex assemblage of chemicals all functioning under the laws of physics, then we have no free will. We make no real decisions. We are just atoms in motion and nothing more.

Marc Roby: That doesn’t strike me as a realistic possibility, and if it is true, then our having this conversation is truly amazing – not to mention completely pointless.

Dr. Spencer: That is absolutely true. And so I will not be looking at monism any further. But I would like to discuss dichotomy and trichotomy in the light of what the Bible tells us.

Marc Roby: I look forward to that, but I think that this is great place to end for today. So let me take this opportunity to remind our listeners that they can email questions and comments to info@whatdoesthewordsay.org and we will do our best to answer.

⁴ Marvin Minsky, *The Society of Mind*, Simon and Schuster, 1986, pg. 306

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid, pg. 307