

Submission - A Place of Grace

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To many people, submission is a word of bondage. It signifies lack of freedom, suppression, loss, and fear. It is something to be questioned at every turn, and if one ever submits, it is with many qualifications and reservations.

This can be traced back to the original source of sin. In effect, Satan said, "I will no longer be in submission to God. I will come out from His authority and be my own authority. I will be my own god." The result was that Satan lost the riches that were his at that time, and he was cast from the presence of God, with eternal hell as the final end. This is the same spirit that characterizes this present world, for Satan is truly "the god of this world." If we want to be lifted back into the presence of God and enjoy the riches of His love, we must turn from the spirit of this world and again know the sweetness of submission.

Submission, when seen in its rightful place and working in our lives, allows us to partake of the grace of God. In reality, there is no other way that we can be lifted up. Consider 1 Peter 5:5-7, *"...God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."* In God, the way up is always down. *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."*

Many of us do not realize that we have been affected by the philosophy of this world, which says, "Put yourself forward. Be somebody. Be an individual. Don't allow anybody to tell you what to do. Don't do anything until you are good and ready and you have decided to do it with no outside pressure." These and many other similar statements are heard all the time. In effect, they are all the same. They deify man and seek to make an individual sufficient in himself. They leave a man separate from God and separate from every other person. The end is loneliness, fear, arrogance, insensitivity to the needs of others, hardness, and every other unlovely characteristic. God is the only source of good, and if we are separate from God, we are evil in every sense of the word.

All Submission Is Unto God

If we are to be set free in the area of submission, the first thing we must see clearly is that all submission is unto God. Submission signifies that authority is being exercised. Jesus said, *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth"* (Matthew 28:18). That is an all-inclusive statement of truth. He is revealed as master over all. While Jesus walked on the face of this earth, there was no situation which He was not in complete control of. Death is perhaps the greatest enemy of man, and yet the Lord showed His mastery even over that in the case of Lazarus (John 11).

If there is a power higher than God, or there are some areas outside His control, then we do have something to fear in submission. But in the cross, He *"disarmed principalities and powers, made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them"* (Colossians 2:15). He is Lord. That is a reality. When we realize that by revelation, and respond in faith to God to that revelation in our hearts, it brings us to a place of quietness. Now everything is in God's hands. What do we have to worry about? Worry or fear is never of God. These only enter in when we have lost our vision of God and His authority over all.

Paul holds the same truth before us in 1 Corinthians 15:27,28: *"For 'He has put all things under His feet.' ...Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."* Here we see the fullness of God's purpose, which is that God may be all in all. His way to this purpose is that He has put all things under Christ. At this point we see Christ as Lord. This was the doing of God, based on what Christ did at the cross. It is the basis of our submission, namely *"that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

Anytime we lose sight of the fact that we are always dealing with God in submission, we see only man, and fear enters in. We begin to have reservations, and quietness in our hearts is replaced with turmoil. We start to try to work things in our own strength and wisdom. Our submission ceases to be spiritual, and the grace of God stops flowing to our hearts. The only way out is repentance, and putting our eyes back on Jesus our Lord. He is the author and finisher of our faith, and He does not fail. We fail when we do not yield to Him and acknowledge Him as Lord, so we must never lose sight of Christ as Lord. That must be a reality in our hearts, not a concept in our minds.

Christ, Our Example In Submission

The manner in which Christ was exalted and given all authority serves as our perfect example of submission. We will quote parts of Philippians 2:5-11, which tell what Christ did. Note that although He was equal with God, He did not consider that equality something to be held onto. Rather, He willingly submitted to a lower place, that is, taking on the form of a man, and not only that, but death of the worst sort and identification with the lowest of mankind. He went from the highest place to the lowest, to secure man's redemption. Because of this, God has highly exalted Him as Lord of all.

Our concepts in our minds are so often distorted, and they must be brought captive to Christ so we can begin to view things as God views them. The world despises the lowly servant, but God thinks otherwise. For Christ to submit to the lowly place did not change who He was. Do we think less of Jesus because He humbled Himself in this manner? On the contrary, we think more. When we consider the cross, our hearts respond in worship and adoration. Did God think less of Christ when He took the lowly place? *"This is My beloved Son, hear Him"* (Matthew 17:5). It did not make Him less in our eyes or God's. He submitted to the place that the Father chose for Him for a purpose. The Father lifted Him up and gave Him glory and honor. The beauty and wonder of it all leaves us bowed low in worship.

Paul says in verse 5, *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."* When we consider other areas of submission that touch our lives every day, we are to have the same spirit that Christ had. We cannot have the same spirit by just copying Jesus, however, but only by having the same Spirit dwell in us as dwelt in Him.

It is not normal for a person apart from Christ to be content in a place of submission. Some may seem to be able to submit more easily, due to their personality, but it will lack the true fragrance of Christ. It is not active submission, but passive indifference. Submission is active. Christ humbled Himself. It was a full act of His will to the very end. Submission that glorifies God is never forced; it is done willingly. Submission that is forced is not spiritual submission.

To know the same mind in us that was in Christ means that we need the same nature. That nature is the nature of God, and is imparted to us when we partake of His life. The life of God is a submissive life, all through. Christ was a full expression of God in human form, and He is seen as the meek and lowly servant. The life of God manifest in any other human being will exhibit the same form. Submission is not a thing we try to do, but a characteristic of the life that we receive from God. When we repent,

partake of His life, and call Him Lord from a pure heart, we become submitted.

Now we have the responsibility to let that submission work out in every other relationship. The end result of responding in active submission is a character trait of humility. We want to look briefly at some of the specific relationships in which God has called us to walk, but in doing so, we must remember that no matter how many relationships we are involved in, each of us is one person and the foundation is submission to God. If we are submitted to God, we will find it easy to work out that submission in all other relationships.

Wives, Submit To Your Husbands

Perhaps one of the most important and far-reaching areas of submission that touches our lives is that of wives to husbands. *"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5:22). *"But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God"* (1 Corinthians 11:3). For the working out of God's purpose in this hour, He has ordained an order for mankind. As mentioned above, God's purpose in view is that He may be all in all. When we submit to God, we also submit to His order. This is God's order, not man's idea, so we do not question His wisdom. We may understand some of the "why's," but whether we do or not, we still submit to His order because He is God and He has ordained this order. We need no other reason. As we submit, the understanding will come as we are able to comprehend it. Obedience comes before understanding.

Note very carefully that this order does not mean that some are more important than others. Is God more important than Christ? God does not think in these terms. Neither is man more important than woman. It is not a question of importance, but of the place God has designed for us to function. We are only of value to God if we are willing to function in the place He has chosen for us. If we have submitted to God, then we will find a place of rest in His order. It is not bondage but freedom. Bondage is trying to be somebody else or function in a place that God has not called us to.

Secondly, note that the submission is "as unto the Lord." To put it in other words, the Lord has commanded this place of submission, so He is the one who will uphold. The submission is not because the husband is worthy of submission, or because the wife agrees with the way he thinks. It is because God has ordained that wives submit to husbands. If the wife is responding in faith to God in this matter (in other words, she has heard the Lord who told her to submit to her husband), then she is responding to God and His order. If she is only submitting because her husband told her to submit, then God is not in view and fear will be present. But God does not give His word without the grace and provision to carry out that word. God is the one who commanded, and He is the one who will protect.

With God in view, all fear is gone. Perfect love casts out all fear. What love is this? God's love in my heart. What does God's love in my heart cause me to do? Obey God in submission. *"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me"* (John 14:21). Note the example given to us in 1 Peter 3:1-6. If we consider some of the circumstances in the lives of Sarah and Abraham, we would say that Abraham made some mistakes. Yet in those mistakes, God protected Sarah. As a wife, if you are submitting in active faith, there is no fear, and God will uphold you even if your husband makes mistakes. Bondage comes when we try to correct those mistakes ourselves instead of waiting on God. God is after something much higher than we see at times, and we need to allow God to obtain His purpose. Sometimes everything has to fall apart in our eyes before we see God put things back together again. When God puts it back together, it is beautiful.

His aims are so much higher than ours. He is working in our hearts for eternity. When we try to take things into our own hands to protect or alter the course of events, many times we find ourselves

directly against God without meaning to be. The safety is to stay in our place, and wait on God's time. This is not passive indifference, but active faith, and there is a big difference between the two.

Note that the area of wives' submission to husbands is given a special place of showing forth the submission of the church to Christ. This is extremely important in the example that is set before the children. A quiet, peaceful wife who has found her place in God and shows forth the spirit of submission to her family is priceless. It is powerful in its effect. Not only does it reveal God to her children, it brings a special sense of responsibility onto the shoulders of her husband. A wife who is not in submission, who is running her own way, causes her husband to sit back and let her run. But when she actively submits herself, her husband immediately begins to feel the weight. His eyes are turned toward his Head, Christ. He must turn, in order to gain the direction needed to have the ability to nourish and cherish. The end result is that the wife is fed and built up by the flow that comes through her husband. For the most part, wives do not realize the power of active submission. Thus they are not nourished, because of their lack of submission.

Another essential point is to see that submission results in an expression of oneness, which brings forth fulfillment in the relationship. Christ submitted to God (the Father). But they are one, and the oneness was not lost in the submission but strengthened, or revealed. So it is between wives and husbands. They are one in God's eyes, but that oneness is brought into expression and strengthened as the wife submits to the husband. It brings them closer together, and makes them able to function as one.

For a husband and wife to move as one in the way God has designed, the wife must submit willingly. If a husband tries to force the submission through lording it over the wife, the relationship is strained and the glory lost. Christ willingly submitted to the will of the Father. The wife willingly submits to the will of her head, her husband. The tension is gone, and now the husband can exercise his responsibility and give direction. They can now move as one in the responsibilities of the family.

It is good to remember that each of us who is married entered into the marriage relationship willingly as responsible adults. We were not forced. When we entered the relationship, which was designed by God, we also entered on God's terms in the relationship. If we expect the relationship to be harmonious and glorify God, then we must conduct the relationship as God designed it, not as man has altered it. If we respond to God in this, there will be one mind, since there will be one head. Where there is not one mind, confusion exists. The children become confused, and the testimony of God is hindered. But as the husband and wife move as one, there is fulfillment, and the joy of both will know no bounds.

Children, Obey Your Parents In The Lord

A second relationship that flows directly from that of the wife to the husband is that of children to parents. The difference here is that children were not born of their own choice into this relationship; thus the total responsibility falls on the parents to see that it is worked correctly.

Children are to be trained in submission at an early age. It is not a question of whether they want to submit or not, but it is up to the parents who see the value of submission. The foundation laid in the early years will have implications over the entire life of a child. *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6). If we love our children, we will give utmost attention to the area of submission and obedience.

Our children will touch authority all through their lives. To be able to properly respond to that authority, they must learn to recognize and submit to that authority quickly and with the right attitude. Their primary place to learn this is in submission and obedience to their parents. If they are allowed to

be independent and self-willed in their response to parents, they will have the same response to all other authority--including God. God has called us to prepare our children for Himself, and the foundation that we are to lay in their lives will prepare them to recognize and submit to His authority. For us to be able to recognize and discern properly, we as parents must be under authority and properly submitted to God. Right seeing comes out of right living. Right living comes out of obedience to God. When God commands us to submit to Him and live, He does so out of care and concern for us. We do the same for our children.

The example of submission unto God in every area of our lives and the expression of the wife's submission to her head are essential in the proper training of our children. If these examples are not present or are weak, the results will be seen in the children. This cannot be avoided. We can never say, "Do as I say but not as I do," and expect anything but trouble. The importance we give to submission to God and His Word forms the background for the importance of our word to our children. We need to do more than set an example, but example serves as the foundation for everything else we do.

Submission One To Another

"Likewise, you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). "...submitting one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21). These verses, with many others, tell us that the nature of our relationship with every brother and sister in the church is one of submission and humility. This is so because this is the nature of God's life. His life expressed is what allows us to be bound together as one.

Before we knew God, we were self-sufficient, but now no man can say that we have no need of another member. God has chosen in His great wisdom to work through each member. Thus, a member is not just another person, but a member of Christ. This is a glorious reality! It leaves man fully involved and God fully in control.

Again, as in other relationships, if only man is in view, this will seem like a place of bondage. But if God is in view, we know no man according to the flesh (2 Corinthians 5: 16). We must see each member as a member of Christ. Now we are no longer dealing with just man--we are dealing with God in union with each member. My expectation is set on the Lord, the Head of the body. I am looking for the supply that is coming to me through each member. When I am fed, I thank the Lord. When I am not being fed, I go to the Lord to see why. If I receive a word of wisdom through man, I recognize the source and thank God. The church is a spiritual working. It is the church of Christ when Christ is in control and each member is alive unto God. Thus, when I am moving in faith in this, God is always in view, and He is the one who is directing me in all matters.

To recognize this truth and walk by faith in the revelation of it is the secret of knowing the supply of His grace to my heart. The body of Christ is God's design, and He has given grace to each member (Ephesians 4:7). He has designed the body perfectly, and put each member in as it pleased Him (1 Corinthians 12:18). Our place is to recognize God's design, ask for spiritual eyes to see and recognize the flow of grace, and submit as unto the Lord. As we submit, we are nourished, and built up in our relationship with God so that we can give a mature expression to His life (Ephesians 4:15,16).

Submission to Elders

"Obey those who lead you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you"

(Hebrews 13:17). The matter of submission to elders is perhaps one of the most feared areas to some, and yet it is one of the most essential expressions of submission if we are to grow in God. Again, as in the previous areas, fear enters in when submission is only to man, with no element of faith.

Faith always brings God into the picture. Faith is attached to the living word of God spoken by a living God. Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. This means that He is present with us to complete that which He has authored. If God is for us, who can be against us? If we are submitted to God, what can man do to us (Hebrews 13:6)? The question is whether we are moving in faith, or just concepts in our minds. By faith we partake of His grace, which changes everything and lifts our submission from the natural to the spiritual.

The matter of elders ruling or leading the church is God's design, not men's. The Lord likens us to sheep, and sheep need a shepherd. Elders are spoken of as shepherds who must give an answer to Christ for the sheep. In the verse just quoted in Hebrews 13:17, the word 'rule' has an alternate translation of 'lead.' Since shepherds lead sheep, the thought of leading is probably a better rendering in this verse. The whole subject of eldership is beyond the scope of this pamphlet, but what we want to see here is that elders are a channel of God's grace to our lives. Our place as the sheep is to recognize God's plan in leadership, acknowledge that it is God who made this provision, and find a place of submission so that God's gift of grace can benefit every member.

The religious world, in general, has proclaimed a message of individual salvation--that salvation is only a personal matter between God and a person, with no others involved. It is true that only God can regenerate a sinner and bring him from death to life, but that is not the whole thought of salvation. Parents cannot give life to a baby; that is something that God does. But parents are given the responsibility of training up that child for 20 years to maturity. In a similar way, only God can bring His life within a soul that repents and turns to God. But God has involved man at every step of the way, including the preaching of the gospel (Romans 8:15). His command to the apostles was to *"go and make disciples"* (Matthew 28:19). That is a training process that involves a great labor. It involves men who are prepared, called of God, and willing to lay down their lives for the sheep.

The command given to men here is based solidly on the statement made by Jesus: *"All authority has been given to Me."* Jesus never delegates that authority to any person. It always resides in Him. To see that by revelation to our hearts lifts our submission from the natural to the spiritual.

Now we see that when we are dealing with one of God's chosen servants, we are not submitting to man but to the Lord. It is the Lord's word we are looking for. This means that God's servants are responsible for speaking the word of God (1 Peter 4:11). Each member is responsible under God for recognizing that living word and submitting to it, however it comes. It is a spiritual working from beginning to end.

There are at least three key elements working in any servant of God such as an elder. These are example, grace, and anointing. We are commanded to know the lives of those who labor (Hebrews 13:7). Elders must be blameless in moral qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-7). The grace must be present for the work in which they are engaged (Ephesians 4:7-16). That ability is God's working for His purposes. And finally, there must be the present divine element of anointing--God's presence--which makes the word alive and leaves us with God (1 John 2:27). That is the final test of the word coming through man to us. Does it leave us with God? In the end, if we are taught anything, we are taught by

God, not man.

The living word brings revelation (seeing) to our hearts, and authors faith. Our response then is obedience to that word. As we obey, the word is made part of our lives, and lifts us up. It becomes the engrafted word which is able to save our souls (James 1:21). We are not just saved from sin (we are delivered from sin), but we are also brought into a living relationship with God, where we can begin to grow. In maturity, we are rooted and grounded in the love of God and cannot be moved off the foundation by anything. That is something that each one of our hearts should be crying for, and God has made full provision to meet the hungry soul.

Submission, Our Place of Safety and Growth

There are other places where submission is working, such as to government and employers. Each one is ordained of God for certain reasons. In all of them, however, our response is the same. We are to recognize the relationship for what it is, recognize the design of God, and with our eyes wide open to the living God, submit completely to God in the relationship. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Remember, we are never dealing with man, but with God. It is God who designed the relationships for His purposes and our benefit.

Active submission to God in these relationships allows the purpose of God to be worked in our lives so we can be a glory and praise to Him. If fear enters in, remember that God is not the author of fear. Perfect love casts out fear. The solution is to come back to God until He fills our vision. It must be crystal clear in our vision, however, that we cannot bypass any of these relationships. They are all part of God's perfect plan. May the Lord encourage each one of us this day to find a place of perfect submission, that He may lift us up.