

Submitting (Part 1)

Bowing to God's Will

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The subject we are going into today has a wide variety of applications in a wide variety of living. In fact, it touches on virtually every aspect of life. Now there may be some aspects of life that this subject does not touch on, but right now I cannot think of very many. So there is almost no part of life that is not touched by the principles involved in the subject that we are going into.

We are going to begin in John 8:32 with a verse that should be in our scriptural memory bank and this is where Jesus says to the people who believed in Him, "if you are my disciples indeed then you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

Now one of the implications of this section of scripture is that freedom is always relative. Nobody is ever free from his responsibility in his relationships to others, especially in one's relationship with God. Political freedom is the kind of freedom that leapt to the Jews' mind in this instance and they replied, "We have never been in bondage to any man." But even at this time, there was a measure of bondage they were in to the Romans, even though they did not consider themselves to be so. But political freedom is not the only kind of freedom that one can have and, in reality, is far from the most important. Nobody is ever free to do everything that one might think to do. One is always going to be constrained by law, by principles, by tradition, or by safety factors to choose to direct oneself in a certain way.

The English word that I am going to use as a title is one that does not appear frequently in English Bibles. However, in the Hebrew and in the Greek, it appears far more frequently than one might expect, but it is translated into a variety of English words depending on the context. This word, this subject, is probably heard most frequently in husband-and-wife relationships, or husband-and-wife sermons, but the Bible in no way restricts its usage to that one subject. If we learn the elements of this subject we will have indeed learned, or have gone a long way toward, being truly free.

The subject is submitting. In the King James Version, the word, submit, appears only twelve times. It appears as submitted three times and submitting one time. In Greek, the language with which we will be mostly dealing today since we will be spending most of our time in the New Testament, the word is *hupotasso*. *Hupotasso* means to arrange in order under. It is actually a military term. And you know in the military there is a very strong sense of having to submit oneself to somebody of higher rank. And so you

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arrange yourself, in order, underneath the sergeants. And the sergeants arrange themselves, in order, underneath the master-sergeants. And the master-sergeants arrange themselves, in order, underneath the lieutenants. And the lieutenants to the captain; and the captain to the major; and it goes right on up to the general; and right on up to the Chief of Staff in the United States. So everything is submitted to the Chief of Staff. And the Chief of Staff himself is under the Commander-in-Chief—the president. Everything is arranged, in order, under. This is what the word means. Its "bare bones" meaning is that one has to arrange himself in order, which is systematically, under something.

It appears in various English Bible translations other than the King James Version (and even sometimes in the King James) as "subordinate, obey, subject to, submit, surrender, be weak, afflicted, humbled, put under," and—how about this one—"stay in your place." Ooh, that one kind of hurts a little!

We are going to be dealing mostly with the New Testament and I am doing that because that is where the Spirit of God's law is mostly dealt with. I want to begin by giving a variety of examples where *hupotasso* appears. First, we are going to the book of Luke. This is an example taken from Jesus' early life. As a matter of fact, He was twelve years old. And Luke, in writing this, makes a remark about Jesus' conduct in relation to His parents.

Luke 2:51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

If you have a marginal reference it probably says, obedient. We also find that the word *hupotasso* is translated as obedient in the Revised Standard Version. So here in the New King James it is translated subject, and in the Revised Standard it is translated obedient. So we can get a shade of the way the translators decided to interpret the context in which this word appears and they put the alternate use in the margin, as well.

Next, Paul writes:

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

This word is translated in the Revised Standard Version and in the New International Version as submit. So we see a shade of change that the translators of those versions

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decided to use here. The carnal mind will not *submit* to God—or to the law of God.

Another writing of Paul's:

I Corinthians 14:34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.

The New International Version says that they (women) are to be in submission. The Revised Standard Version says that they are to be subordinate. And the Revised English Bible says to let the women keep their place.

I Corinthians 15:27 For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.

Here we find the word *hupotasso* translated, "put under," which is its literal meaning. The Revised Standard Version and the Revised English Version interpret the word as "subjected to."

Another familiar one that probably everybody knows is:

Ephesians 5:21-22, 24 submitting to one another in the fear of God. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord? Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Philippians 3:21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Hupotasso is here translated subdue. The Revised English Bible and the Revised Standard Version translate this "subject to." In the New International Version it says "under His control."

Titus 2:5 [young women are admonished to love their husbands; to love their children] to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

We have come full circle from Luke 2:51 and the word, *hupotasso*, is again translated "obedient." The Revised Standard Version says "submissive." The New International Version says "subject to." And the Revised English Bible says "respecting the authority of."

Sometimes it is difficult to perceive the difference between submission and obedience. There is a difference and it lies in the subtleties of things that may not appear readily to the eye. But they are very apparent—*they are very apparent*—to the one who is either obeying or submitting.

Obey (you can look this up in any good dictionary) simply means "to follow the command of." It means to conform. It means to comply with an order.

Submit, though, means "to yield, or defer out of respect; superior authority, affection, persuasion, or compulsion."

Now we can see that the word, submit, has a much broader application and its uses are much more definite, specific, and focused than is obedience. It is like obedience can take place anywhere under any kind of circumstance. But submission has an aspect to it in which a person's will is involved and in a way that is very important in regard to the development of character. And it is very important to God in regard to other things which we will get to as we go along in the sermon.

Let me ask a question. Does God want unthinking obedience from us simply because we are complying or conforming to something; or does God want us to think things through and submit because we know fully that it is the right thing to do? Which is better? What if you have a choice between obedience to something and, we will say, disobedience to something, but the disobedience would actually be obedience to God? Are you going to obey the ones that are putting the pressure on you to do something that God says not to do; or are you going to submit to God and disobey the other?

This begins to set up very interesting circumstances in a person's life. I am sure that it is a major reason why the word "*hupotasso*" is used rather than the Greek word for obedience, which is "*hupakoe*"—attentive hearkening. The apostles, and God, wanted us to know that we are to think these things through and not merely to comply. We are to use our minds and go in a chosen direction because we realize and know and understand and set our will to submit to the right and good and true.

I will probably, as I concentrate on what I am trying to say here, use the words interchangeably because they are related and because there are times that the Bible

does seem to use them in the same way.

Let us begin by asking: why is submitting so difficult? I believe that there are two basic reasons. One has to do with education and the other has to do with attitudes. The one occurs because we all want to be free. I do not know anyone who does not want to have more liberty than they have right now. It is one of the major themes in the Bible, but we have a problem. The cause of this problem is that we have been mis-educated. This is problem number one as to why we have difficulty submitting. We have been mis-educated.

Because of this mis-education, all of us would put a different spin on what it means to be free. Being free does not mean the same thing to every person because the same things are not equally important to everybody. Some people have placed their spin on freedom, because of their circumstance, as a need for more food. Let us make a real obvious example. The Somalis, if they had their liberty, would desire to have an adequate supply of food. Or maybe their desire, if they were free, would be to not live in fear of being shot in the street—something of that nature. There are people who would want to be free to exercise their sexual passions with a great deal more liberty. On and on it goes. Everybody puts a little bit different twist on what they would like to be free to do. Why is this? Peter makes a simple statement in regard to this.

I Peter 1:18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct [conduct that was going nowhere] received by tradition from your fathers?

Tradition is that cultural way, method, or outlook that is imposed on us from birth. The influences of our culture are layered on us like an onion. We know how an onion is constructed—with one layer on top of another. What are the layers of culture—that is, our culture and, therefore, traditions—heaped upon us?

The first layer is impressed on us by the home, the family—or the lack thereof. It begins to set our minds as to what is important in life. Then there is a slightly larger segment—the neighborhood. At first, the neighborhood does not have a great deal of influence, but once we begin to expand our lives outside of the home, mother's and dad's influence slowly begins to wane. Our peers and our neighborhood begin to impress upon us a little bit more tradition. A little bit broader cultural layer begins to develop because we have escaped, as it were, from the home and have now gone out into the neighborhood. We keep layering it out and the city has an impact on us, the state, the region, and then the nation.

If we go backwards in this and begin to look at people, we begin to see very clearly what I mean. First of all, there are national characteristics; and you know this. Cartoonists, for example—political cartoonists—are very quick to pick up on this and they will draw a political cartoon that emphasizes a certain characteristic, let us say, of a Frenchman, or a German, or a Dutchman. And they illustrate where this person is from by portraying the characteristics of that nation in a particular way because these people have a traditional look that we recognize.

Well these keep going all the way down and there are the state characteristics, or the regional characteristics. I am speaking here to a room full of southerners. Everybody knows that a southerner has a way of speaking that is regional; it is part of their makeup and is part of the tradition that they carry with them everywhere. It is impressed upon the person and it becomes a part of what he projects; it becomes a part of the way he looks at things. And so, in a general way, things that are important to a southerner are not quite so important to a northerner, or a north westerner, or to a Californian. Even something that is important to a northern Californian is not of the same importance to a southern Californian. And all of these things are impressed upon us and that is where tradition comes into the picture.

Peter said that we have been redeemed from *tradition*. In the United States this thing about tradition has gotten so crazy. One of the buzzwords of our time is multiculturalism. We have people in the United States and in Canada who want to make sure that English is not the official language of the nation because they want to hang on to another culture. It used to be that when people immigrated to our nation that they strove to conform to the culture and tradition that we have. They wanted to become full-fledged Americans and Canadians. So what did they have to do in order to do that? They had to *submit* to the customs and traditions of their new homeland.

But today there is a very powerful drive to get people to do just the opposite. They are being encouraged to hold on to the customs and traditions of their former homelands. It is going a long way toward tearing these nations apart! What we are slowly being driven toward is an absolute confusion of ideas because we cannot agree. We have an environment ready-made for conflict—unless someone submits.

The world is the way it is because Adam and Eve took of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which indicates knowledge from many sources. This was sort of a preview of multiculturalism—knowledge from many sources without the spiritual guidance of God. We have got to get God into the picture here. Remember what I Peter 1:18 said—"We have been redeemed from the aimless conduct which we received by tradition from our fathers."—as we now look in II Thessalonians.

II Thessalonians 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

Brethren, God has His traditions! Now—what does that do? On the one hand we have the traditions that God is teaching us through His Word, through His ministers. He has traditions to which He wants His Family to conform. But we have brought traditions with us out of the world. They are southern traditions, northern traditions, California traditions, north-western traditions, Texas traditions, and on and on it goes. It sets the stage for conflict, does it not? The traditions of God and the traditions that we have brought with us out of the world are in conflict! When we add to this our desire to be free, it really makes an almost interesting mess!

II Thessalonians 3:6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

God has His traditions and the major difference is that His are right and true and they work! However, because conversion is a process and we do not instantly and magically know all of God's traditions, we all bring our former traditions into the church with us. Thus the church is set up for conflict and this is a major reason for the writing of the book of Ephesians. It shows there, that in order for there to be unity, both Israelite and Gentile have to *submit* to Christ because both of their cultures and traditions are wrong!

Again, point number one of why it is so difficult to submit is because we have been mis-educated by the traditions of family, society, region, state, and nation. We carry those characteristics with us. I am not about to say that every one of them is wrong, but they do set us up for conflict with God and with each other. Only the traditions of God are completely right and true and will produce the right things. And when there is conflict between the traditions that we have brought in to the church and God's traditions, we then have to submit to God because we are not free to do as we please. If we do as we please because we put our own particular spin on what we think liberty is, it will bring us into conflict with God. And that is not nice! It is detrimental to one's spiritual health and one's relationship with God!

The second reason we have trouble is because our attitudes are perverted.

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and

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sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit [get that!] who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh [notice what is driving human beings. This wicked spirit is motivating the *lusts* of our flesh], fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

So there is a spirit that is characterized by desire (or we might say "lust") to have it our way. Mis-education combined with negative attitudes equals conflict. Human nature is a package of attitudes dominated by the desire to gratify the self. That is why there is so much conflict. You can check this out with James 4:1-3.

What happens is that our desires—whether it is husband and wife in marriage, or in business, or in politics among nations—keep crashing into one another. Conflict will never end until everyone is keeping the traditions of God. And so we are in the process of conversion. It is our responsibility to convert over to God's traditions so that we are not crashing into one another. We have to overcome this mis-education and we have to overcome this attitude to gratify the self.

Satan, we see, is ultimately the source of both of these. We have to recognize that we are still influenced and that we pick up on his broadcasts. This is what makes submitting so difficult. The adversary is still working and he is bringing about conflict. Anywhere Satan goes there is going to be conflict. He is a master at producing it.

Liberty without guidelines (like laws, principles, doctrines, policies, or even the example of another person) to which one submits (meaning us as individuals through self-control or self-governing) will turn into chaos. Again, liberty without guidelines to which people, through self-control (we might say self-government) submit, will turn into chaos because of the desire for the power to control. The desire to control is what we would call freedom—liberty. That is why there are so many horrible divorces and re-marriages. Submission, whether accepted willingly or grudgingly, is a necessity. It is better to accept it and do it grudgingly than to not do it at all.

We have to understand, then, that there is authority. It may be God, it may be another human being, it may be in a law that is written, it may be in a circumstance, but there is going to be authority, there, represented by something. It is an unavoidable fact of life. We are going to be facing it all the time. Everybody lives under authority and everybody must submit even if it is only to the law of nature. There is hardly a person who will not

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submit to the law of gravity while he is standing on the edge of a thousand-foot drop. It is that simple. And so, because we step away from the cliff and not over it, we have submitted to a law. Why? Because we want to preserve our liberty, our desire, to live. We know if we break that law—if we do not submit to it—it is going to crush us at the bottom of a thousand-foot drop. And so we submit.

On the way over here we had an interesting illustration: we saw two people go by on a motorcycle. The person on the back of the motorcycle was a young lady. She obviously did not dress for the circumstances—for riding a motorcycle. She wore on her feet a pair of flip-flops. Most people who ride motorcycles wear boots. She wore shorts, not pants. She was hanging on for dear life with her arms wrapped around the stomach of the guy in front of her. This young lady was giving us a beautiful illustration of somebody who was not submitting to the laws of common sense. Should that bike have slid out from underneath them, her liberty would have been very severely restricted. She might not have gotten out even with her life, or maybe she would have suffered the loss of a leg or something else.

I want us to see this subject in broad application. Submission does not only involve relationships with God or relationships with other people. Submission involves almost every area of life and it involves submitting to things we would call common sense or even the laws of nature. Anybody who has the mind of God is going to be looking for every opportunity to submit because that is where freedom lies.

Think back to John 8:32 where it says that you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. Is not the implication that you shall be free only if you submit to the truth? But knowing it is not enough. So he is saying that liberty comes to those who submit to the truth. If you are standing on the edge of a cliff and there is a thousand-foot drop there, common sense and the truth of God say that you obey the law of gravity—unless you want to give up your freedom to live. Are we all on the same wavelength? True liberty consists of submitting to truth. That is where liberty lies. And that is what God wants us to have.

But still we have great fear when dealing with people.

Proverbs 29:2 When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan.

What if the ruler, what if the one to whom you are supposed to submit, is an oppressive person? What if he is not really oppressive? What if he is just incompetent or dumb and

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we know better how to do the job that he is supposed to be doing? What if the person is sexually immoral? What if the person is financially greedy? Does God still want us to submit? What protection do we have in these kinds of circumstances?

Proverbs 16:2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, But the Lord weighs the spirits.

It might be an abomination, but those in authority do evil. They might have very serious character flaws which makes their victims get caught up in the effects of their flaws. What is so maddening is that these people justify their evil—seeing it as good—and they will turn around and they will blame the innocent for the evil that occurs.

For example, the proverb says that "all the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes." The incompetent man does not think to himself, "I am really dumb, stupid, idiotic, and I should not even have this job." The sexually immoral person really does not see himself in that way. For instance, most prostitutes will say, "Yes, I am doing something that is wrong according to the law, but I am providing a service that is needed and wanted. If it was not needed and wanted there would not be any business for what I am doing." They justify themselves. They are pure in their own eyes. They may even come to the place where, if somebody leaves something of value on the front seat of an automobile and they take it, (perhaps they are then caught an hour later), they will get around to blaming the person who was stupid enough to leave it on the seat of their car in the first place!

What if we are under the authority of one who thinks within these parameters? The chances are very great that every one of us either are now, or have been, because this proverb says that all the ways of a man are right, or pure, in his own eyes. He is going to think justification for what he does and the way he does it.

Look at the enemies of Jesus. They felt justified in taking His life on the grounds that He was stirring up the people. There was never anybody more innocent who ever lived on the face of the earth. And yet they justified what they were doing because the people were being stirred up by Him. They accused Him of being a revolutionary threat to community stability.

If we are in a position like this, where we are under an oppressive ruler who is justifying the way he is doing things and we are suffering the effects of what he is doing, we feel like powerless pawns being taken advantage of. We feel that the liberty to do what we want is being denied by this person. Is it really? Is it really? The answer to this is both yes, and no. What we are going to have to do to get an answer here is to look at what

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Jesus did in similar circumstances. This is why I mentioned these people taking Jesus' life and justifying what they were doing. Again, they accused Him of being a revolutionary who was stirring up the people.

This next scripture is in the context of when Jesus was on trial for His very life before Pilate. This occurred *after* He was scourged

John 19:10 Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?"

He was at liberty to make the choice to do either. And he was a corrupt official. His record, according to secular history, was not at all good. He was what we would call today a mean ruler, corrupt.

John 19:11 Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."

I need to inject here that I am not talking about circumstances where somebody is demanding that you submit and, by doing so, break the law of God. I am not speaking about things that involve sin here, but simply submitting to somebody who is unreasonable and oppressive.

Jesus' response here is very meaningful to you and me. It shows very clearly His attitude, His approach, to every circumstance of His life. It is because of what we are going to see in this principle that I began my preaching, after I came out of the Worldwide Church of God, with the sermon that I did. I asked in that sermon, "Do you see God?" Is He really a part of your life? Is He really running this creation? Is He really sitting at the controls of things? Is He really aware of you, as an individual? Does He have every hair on *your* head numbered? Are you really the apple of His eye? Is your life really in His hands? Have you really given it to Him, or are you holding part of it in reserve?

"You could have no power at all against me—unless it had been given you from above." Jesus saw life very clearly and very simply that God was in complete control of everything that was going on in the universe. It does not mean that everything was directed by Him in the sense that He was causing it to occur. But, nonetheless, Jesus believed, with every fiber of His being, that God was with Him all the time, everywhere,

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and at every moment. He believed that His life was in His hands and that Pilate would not be able to do one thing against Him except God would pass on it.

Would God allow us to have to submit, or be faced with submitting, to somebody who was cruel, hard-hearted, incompetent, sexually unbalanced and perverted, stupid, or financially greedy? Would He have us to live and work under such a person? We see it and it kind of grinds away at us. Everything, carnally, in this situation at Jesus' trial and crucifixion looked as though it was totally stacked against Him. It appeared as though He had every right to rebel. "Do you not know to whom you are doing this," He could have asked? Instead He said, "You would not have the power to do anything except that My Father passed on this. And He is now looking at Me to see how I am going to respond. Am I going to submit to the authority that He has permitted to be in this position?"

Do we see God in our lives within these kinds of parameters? We have to begin to look at ourselves differently than the way the world does. And we have to decide whether we are in the hand of God or not. Do we have the faith to trust that we are, and that these constituted authorities are, too, in His hand? Do we believe that God is aware of what is going on and that He deeply cares about what we are going to do in each and every situation? He must know what kind of witness we are going to make?

Proverbs 24:21-22 My son, fear the Lord and the king; Do not associate with those given to change; for their calamity will rise suddenly, and who knows the ruin those two can bring?

It is an overall principle. He is saying, "Do not rebel! Have respect for God. Have respect for the authority that He has constituted to rule over the land—the king!" The warning can be taken two ways. One: when one rebels, the ruler and the rebel are ruined; "who knows the ruin those two can bring?" The other way is that the rebel may be ruined by the both of them. God wants us to know that there is no liberty in that direction.

Submitting is difficult because it, seemingly unfairly, involves giving up our rights to one whom we would judge not deserving of our submission. Or it often involves putting someone else's needs before our own. A right is that to which someone has a legal, moral, or traditional claim to. One of the cries of this culture, this age in which we live, is that "we have our rights"—constitutional rights, women's rights, homosexual rights, etc. But democracy, for the most part anyway, does not train us very well to submit. We have rather vague feelings about being just as good as the other fellow. That is the way we approach it; that is the impression our culture leaves. "Well, who is he? I am just as

good as he is!"

With that tendency to resist authority we, at the very least, submit with a resigned attitude—in a grudging way. This is what many of us do. In other words, we go along, but we do it begrudgingly and we hold in reserve the thought that we are just as good as the next guy.

We need to ask ourselves another question: "Is doing things in a grudging way all that good, either?" Here is where obedience can come into the picture rather than submission because we just comply. That is all, we simply comply. But maybe the heart and the mind is not changed—certainly not changed for the better. And so we must ask ourselves, then, "Does obedience in a grudging way really lead to more liberty, more equality, or more prosperity?"

Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

For the purposes of this sermon, the most important phrase is, "there was no king." This begs the question, "why?" Why was there no king? I want us to think about the Israelites and their history—that which is recorded beginning in the book of Exodus and carrying right on through Numbers and Deuteronomy and on into the book of Judges. I want us to think about their conduct. I want us to think about their relationship with Moses, their relationship with Joshua, their relationship to the judges that were given to them by God. I want us to remember about the awful time, if I can put it that way, which they gave to Moses while they were in the wilderness. They would not submit! They brought with them the culture of Egypt! And they were never converted—they never changed! They would not submit to the traditions of God given to Moses in the wilderness and taught to them. And so they were in conflict with the leader the whole while. When they entered into the land under Joshua and the judges this conduct never stopped.

Why was there no king? In reality there was—God was King! There was no king because they would not submit to anybody. These people in the book of Judges, we could say, were the freest society that ever existed on earth! "Everyone did that which was right in his own eyes!" Is this not the kind of freedom toward which we seem to be headed in the United States—the kind of freedom where everybody is doing what is right in his own eyes? Do we not have central law and central authority and standards that are absolute and rock solid—to which everyone should look for guidance—being pooh-poohed? "We do not need those kinds of things!" So we espouse situation ethics (there is no king) meaning there is no recognized central authority to which one cares to

submit.

There was (in ancient Israel) nobody to set standards, nobody to set goals for the nation, nobody to provide direction, nobody to administer programs, nobody to harmonize their efforts, nobody to provide for the common defense. The result? Chaos! And chaos continued until the people finally got it through their head that they needed a central authority. And so they asked Samuel for a king. They did not ask for the right thing and it greatly upset Samuel.

What they should have asked was for Samuel to appeal to God that He take a more direct hand and send them prophets and priests and teachers to show them the right way. Instead they asked for a human king. But you see, in their carnality they finally came to the place where they recognized that if anything productive was going to be done they would need a central authority. The only time there was peace in the land was when God, in His mercy, would raise up a Gideon, or raise up a Jephthah, or raise up a Tola, or raise up a Samson. The people would then gather around that central authority and things calmed down for forty years, or for eighty years or so. But they would then reject the central authority and common standards, go back to their old way, and things would again fall into chaos.

I believe that this nation—the United States of America, and Canada, too—are being purposefully manipulated into a state of chaos so that the people will *beg* for a strong central authority to take over and restore peace. You just watch what is happening as our liberties are eroded away and we fall into the trap! You watch what happens, because that is what happened to the Israelites in the time of the judges!

Submitting is a word, it is a principle, which most Canadians and Americans have been educated to disrespect. This rises from our fear of being enslaved, or the feeling that one will be looked upon as weak—as a doormat—if they submit. God has called us from a culture in which "equality" is a buzzword that gets a great deal of attention.

Christ, who had every right a person could possibly have to exert His rights and authority, pointedly submitted to cruel and unusual treatment of the most extreme nature. And He committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. When we put Christ's example into the picture, I think that we can give an accurate definition of what God means by submitting. Biblical submission is respecting divinely appointed authority out of respect for Christ.

I want to examine a succession of scriptures that I think will build our understanding of this principle in the right way. Remember Christ's example in John 19 where His

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justification for acting the way He did was that Pilate did not have any authority to do what he did except that it was given to him by God.

Ephesians 5:21 ...submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Why do we submit? It is out of respect for God. That is what Jesus did. He submitted to the authority of Pilate because of God.

Colossians 3:22-25 Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

Is God involved? Do we see what the Apostle Paul is doing? He is bringing the example of Christ, and Christ's attitude toward those who were in authority, all the way down to an employment level. We found in Ephesians 5:21 that he brought it down to a relationship within a congregation. But in either case the submitting was done out of respect for God—not because the authority was great, not because there was a better man or woman; it had nothing whatsoever to do with the character of the person who was in authority.

Our submission has everything to do with our relationship to God and what we know of Him and the purpose that He is working out. The biblical definition of submission is becoming very clear. This is in perfect harmony with Romans 12 where he says to "live with all men in peace" and, he also says there, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay!"

It is beginning to become very clear that submission is an act of faith. It has nothing at all to do with the quality of the person to whom we are submitting. It has nothing to do with his character. It does not matter whether he is a good guy or a bad guy. It does not matter whether or not we feel what he is doing is unjust. It may be very unjust—like the taking of the life of Christ was very unjust. But Christ submitted to whatever God permitted. And He did it out of fear, out of respect; out of faith that God had Him in His hands and that nothing was going to happen before its time. He knew God was concerned about the outcome of His life.

So then, biblical submission is respecting divinely appointed authority out of respect for

Christ.

Are we familiar with an overview of the book of Romans? It is probably the most foundational, at least doctrinally, in terms of those teachings that have to do with salvation. Its material is presented in a very orderly fashion. Paul builds his case one layer on top of another. He begins in chapter one by explaining to the Gentiles that they are sinners—they are no good! In chapter two he says, "You Jews are sinners, too. You are no good, either!" In chapter three, in case anybody got left out, he says that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God!" This is the foundation. In chapter four he begins talking about faith. Chapter five introduces obedience. Chapter six addresses baptism. In chapter seven he talks about the law. Chapter eight he talks about the Holy Spirit. And then on through chapters nine, ten, and eleven he goes on a long digression about Israel.

When we get to chapter twelve he says, "Well, what are we going to do with all of this? We have all of this material, what are we going to do with it?" And so he gets to the ethical instruction in the book. The doctrinal teaching is ended, at least in a major way, and he asks, in effect, "What are you going to do; how are you going to conduct your life as a result of this salvation that God is giving us?" And so he says:

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

What he is saying here is, "This is where we need to submit. Do not conform. Do not comply with the world, but instead we need to submit to God." Then he begins to address more specific areas where we need to submit.

Romans 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse [yes, even those who are in authority over us and who are corrupt. They are sinners. They may be wicked]

Romans 12:16 Be of the same mind toward one another [submitting to one another in the fear of God]

Romans 12:17-19 Repay no one evil for evil [do not retaliate, he says]. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as

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depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord

Romans 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

Now can we see where Paul got that? At the very least, he got that from the example of Christ—who submitted to wicked and corrupt officials and authorities. He had every right to rebel. He was completely innocent and had done nothing wrong—nothing of which He was accused had been part of His conduct. He had every intention of doing the right thing and He carried through with it.

What I want us to see is that the Christian consciously chooses to suffer evil rather than do evil because it would be wrong to do anything other than what Christ did. He set the example. He is the archetype. He is the one Who goes before. The Christian is not a masochist, but by faith he is taking a step to prevent war. He does this because he recognizes that two wrongs do not make a right. Just because someone abuses authority does not give us the right from God to fail to submit to it. That is why there is never any stop to war. Somebody gets into power, somebody abuses authority, those who are under authority react carnally and retaliate and get back at those who are in authority—and the cycle never ends!

Is there ever going to be peace? There will be peace when people submit to God. And that means submitting to His way. If everybody would submit to God's way, war would stop overnight—that would be the end! But men will not submit to God. One of the major things we are to learn while we are here is to learn to submit under duress, under abuse—when the pressure is on and the desire to retaliate is at its strongest. We have to learn to not justify our retaliation by saying, "He made me do it—the devil made me do it!" All the ways of man are right in his own eyes.