

## **Sovereignty And Submission**

### **Submitting to God**

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Most of us live in the United States of America, and those of you on Internet-land or tape cassette-land, probably most of you live in a democracy as well. A hallmark of democracy is the idea of personal freedom. In America, we call our nation the "Land of the Free," and we are very proud of our freedoms that are granted to us. Our founding documents are full of freely granted, even (as in Thomas Jefferson's language) divinely granted freedoms and rights. We are guaranteed life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The famous slogan of the French Revolution is of the same ilk, "Liberty, Equality, and Brotherhood."

Because of this, we are at a disadvantage when it comes to our relationship with God. I do not know how much you have ever thought about it, but our being reared in a democratic nation in many ways flies in the face of forming a solid and proper relationship with God.

In fact, our liberty with God is very different from our human freedoms that we have among men. God calls us, as it says in John 8, to be free, but it says in Romans that we are called to be slaves of righteousness. That is a different kind of freedom. We have been freed from sin, but we have been called then to be slaves of righteousness.

The type of liberty that we have in this world is very different from the type of liberty we have with God. We are not equal with God, harkening back to the "Liberty, Equality, and Brotherhood."

Everything God is transcends what we are. There is no equality there. He is far above us. He says that His thoughts are higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. There's no comparison, really. He is not our pal. He's not our chummy brother. He is the Almighty One, the Creator God. He's worthy of all honor and reverence and worship.

Human ideas about government do not transfer well into this divine relationship. They are so different. We are not in a democracy when it comes to God. In fact, I think it was Herbert Armstrong who said that the closest human form of government to God's government is a benevolent dictatorship. That's a far cry from a democracy. When one being has control of everything, but (you have to put the word benevolent in there) He does it for our ultimate good in all things.

Now that definition, benevolent dictatorship, leaves very little room for democracy or a relationship among equals under the law, let's say. No, the government we come under as members of God's church, under God, is a sovereign ruler, a benevolent dictatorship. He is sovereign over all and we have to learn to come under that government.

Now that brings up a very interesting question. If we believe God to be sovereign over all things, including us, why do we think that we have the right to pick and choose what we believe? If God is our sovereign and His word is good and trustworthy and righteous and holy, incontrovertible and ultimately beneficial, why do we often fail to submit to it, even if we believe it?

So on this Feast of Trumpets, the day we feel foreshadows Christ returning to establish God's government on the earth as King of kings (that's sovereign), Lord of lords (over every kind of lord, every kind of master, every kind of king) . . . on this day we need to look at sovereignty from its underside or maybe a little bit kinder word would be its flip side.

Sovereignty's flip side is submission. What is the use, what is the purpose of sovereignty if no one submits to it? Have you ever thought about it that way? God could be the ruler of everything and what good does that do Him if no one submits to His sovereign rule? Hasn't He made the universe, the earth, and everything in it to ultimately give Him sons and daughters? Subject sons and daughters. Isn't it all working toward that end? What is a ruler without subjects? What is a king without subjects? What is a leader without followers?

So what it comes down to then is this: if we are going to be working in tandem with God, and do our part to bring about the Kingdom of God, and

our entrance into it and eternal life, then we have to submit. That's our part in this whole scheme, this whole plan of God's in bringing about sons and daughters into His Kingdom. And really, that is part of what this holy day pictures—the ultimate submission of everyone to God.

God has given us His Word as the instruction manual for our lives. Its contents, if followed, will lead us to His Kingdom. There's no doubt about that. He included everything that we need in the Book. That's not difficult to understand. God's Word is really very clear, very understandable, and it's eternally applicable. We just heard in the sermonette here this morning about Abraham and Lot and the choices they made. But the principle of that is applicable now as we're about to go into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Everything in the Bible can apply at one time or another in our lives.

God also supplies extra insight, understanding, and power to put it into practice by His Spirit. I know we've all had experiences with this in overcoming, certain areas that we hadn't overcome before. But we applied something that God had said and by an extra measure of His Spirit and help from Him, we're able to surmount it and go on.

But how often do we fail to apply it? Sure, we've had some successes, but if your life is anything like mine, we've had more failures than successes. How often do we reject the advice we get from God? He might say it very plainly, such things as doing good as often as you have the chance. How often do we let something like that slip by because we're in a hurry or we just don't feel like it. We got up on the wrong side of the bed that day. How often do we refuse to submit just out of plain, old orneriness, because we want to do something else?

Have you ever wondered how God must feel when we fail to submit to Him? Have you wondered what His face would look like, what expression would be on His face, if He had just, personally, given you some advice . . . He said, "No, so and so, I think that you should not plan to go out on Friday night. I think that it would be much better for you to keep the Sabbath in another way." And then you turn right around and go ahead and make those plans to go out on Friday night. If you turned back and looked at God's face, what would be the expression there? Have you ever thought about it that

way? Would He say, "Alright, go ahead and do your own thing." Do you think God would do that? I doubt it. You'd probably see a little bit of sadness, maybe even dismay, maybe a bit of frustration, a bit of pique, maybe even some *anger*, because *here He just told you* what the right way was and you turned around and did something that was not as good, that was contrary to His advice. I could say "command," because He's the sovereign.

Have you ever given advice to somebody and had them turn around and simply reject it, throw it in your face? I know this happens a lot with children as they get older. The mother or father will sit down with the older child and say, "I don't think you should go out with that person. He has done drugs in the past. He's been known to shoplift. He doesn't even comb his hair." However many different excuses there might be or pieces of advice. The parents would come up with all kinds of things to dissuade this young woman or young man that the person they're seeing is not of the highest caliber and they can do better. And then, within days, they're still going out. How does the parent feel when their advice is dismissed?

Has that ever happened to you, something along that line? Haven't you felt somewhat rejected? Haven't you felt maybe even a little worthless? "Well, who am I then if you're just going to go out and do whatever you want to do?" Maybe even a little angry, right, because it hurts to be rejected. We often deal with hurt through anger. Maybe it's not the best reaction, but we do have those emotions. Have you ever thought that maybe God has similar reactions when we do the same thing to Him?

Let's go to Numbers 14. You'll see an example here of two maybe three million people thumbing their noses at God in the wilderness and you'll see God's reaction to this. He wasn't happy that what He had told them was so quickly, hardly without a thought, rejected out of hand.

I should explain the situation here. They had come to the edge of the Promised Land and God told Moses to send in the spies to check it out for forty days. They went from one end of the land to the other and they came back, and ten of the spies really thought this wasn't a good idea that they go in there because there were giants in the land. They were too small to be able to overcome them.

But Joshua and Caleb came back with a good report. "We can do this. We have God behind us. Let's go in and take this land. Who cares if there are Anakim there. It doesn't matter."

This is God's response. I want to read verse 9 because this is Joshua's warning to them.

**Numbers 14:9** "Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread [we'll eat them up]; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them."

That's a ringing endorsement for God's sovereignty and His power. Their reaction:

**Numbers 14:10** And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. . . .

A cry went up. Gather your stones! Find your bricks! Find your boulders! Let's stone them! And God said, "This has to stop here."

**Numbers 14:10-11** . . . Now the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel. [He stepped in immediately.] And the LORD said to Moses: "How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them?"

Do you think He said (softly), "how long will these people reject me?" Do you think He said it like that? He said, "How long will these people reject Me?!" God was *angry* at their rebellion! He had made it very plain in the promises He had made that He would bring them into the land. His word backed this up. "I will bring you into the Promised Land." There's no need for anything more than that. God said it. He's going to do it. His word doesn't return to Him empty. If He says He's going to perform it, it's going to be performed.

How many times had He demonstrated His power to these 2½ to 3 million people? There were ten plagues in Egypt. He killed all the firstborn, both of men and beast. He had parted the Red Sea and the army of Pharaoh was drowned there. He had taken water out of a rock. He performed all those miracles on Sinai. Moses had come down with a shining face. They had seen the tables that had been written with the hand of God.

How many other things did He do? Every day manna fell from the sky. They ate the proof every day that God would do as He said and *still*, they refused. They rejected Him out of hand. And then, of course, you had the eyewitness testimony of men like Moses and Aaron and Joshua and Caleb and the other elders. Remember, there were seventy elders that went up on the mount and saw Him and ate with Him. What more proof do you need that God will do what He says? But the people rejected Him.

Just as Joshua had foreshadowed in his words to them, they failed to submit and they became rebels. And you know what they got for their rebellion? An extremely stiff sentence from God. Verse 26:

**Numbers 14:26-35** And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who murmur against Me? I have heard the murmurings which the children of Israel murmur against Me. Say to them, 'As I live,' [He's swearing here. That's an oath in most cases where it's said, "On My eternal life."] says the LORD, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: The carcasses of you who have murmured against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in. But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for

each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection. [They had rejected Him. Now they, because of their non-submission, would be rejected by Him.] I the LORD have spoken this; I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die."

That's stiff and He was quite angry. You can tell by the words He used that He said, "Enough! You've rejected Me once too often, now I reject you."

Do you think this is the only time this happened? Let's go to Jeremiah 13. You would think maybe that Israel, particularly Judah, would have learned this lesson by now. Here we are in the days of Jeremiah, which was getting very close to the time they were about to be sent into exile, into Babylon. So this was somewhere around 600 BC, somewhere before or somewhere after. Verse 1:

**Jeremiah 13:1-6** Thus the LORD said to me, "Go and get yourself a linen sash, and put it around your waist, but do not put it in water." [Don't wash it, He means.] So I got a sash according to the word of the LORD, and put it around my waist. And the word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying, "Take the sash that you acquired, which is around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole in a rock." So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me. And it came to pass after many days . . .

Often this term "many days" means three years. I don't know if it was that long or not, but a lot of times that's what it means.

**Jeremiah 13:6-7** . . . that the LORD said to me, "Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take from there the sash which I commanded you to hide there." Then I went to the Euphrates and dug [He had to dig it out. It was not something that had been laid very nicely, folded, behind a rock somewhere.] and I took the sash from the place where I had hidden it; and there was the sash, ruined. It was profitable for nothing.

Okay, here comes the lesson from God:

**Jeremiah 13:8-11** Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Thus says the LORD: 'In this manner I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. This evil people, who refuse to hear My words [similar to what He said back there in Numbers 14], who walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be just like this sash which is profitable for nothing. For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so I have caused the whole house of Israel [He doesn't just leave it with Judah. He includes Israel.] and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me,' says the LORD, 'that they may become My people . . .

He had done this by His sovereign will, called Israel and obviously within that, Judah, to be His people, and to be so close to Him as to be tied around His waist. They were God's sash. That's how closely they were aligned with Him. Okay, He had caused this to happen and the reason now, God says, that He had done this was:

**Jeremiah 13:11** . . . for renown [for them and for Him], for praise [for them and for Him], and for glory [for both of them, again]; but they would not hear.'

This is very interesting. The very same attitude that their forefathers had had in the wilderness. God had warned them for a while, but they kept rebelling. So finally, God had to dig a hole in the Euphrates and put them away. That's the picture here, because when they were taken captive, they went beyond the Euphrates to Babylon. And there they were pretty much buried in Babylon.

If you want to take the symbolism, when they came out, what did he say? They were pretty much useless, and that's true. How many came back from Babylon, out of how many millions that were in Judah and Jerusalem at the time they came up against Babylon? How many came back? A little over 42,000, I think. Of all the millions that went into exile, He had to start with a



very small remnant once again. Maybe about one percent. How many Jews were in Judah at the time of the exile? A couple of million? And it got down to about 42,000 that wanted to come back and rebuild.

What we see here is, that for their refusal, they were put into exile. Exile, like wandering in the wilderness, like *scattering* across the breadth of the land, they're all punishments for failing to submit to God. If you wonder why the church is scattered, well there's your answer. The church had been failing to submit. Not all of us, but most of us. Enough that God said I've got to do something. And so, He punishes in order to wake us up.

This passage has an interesting facet to it which I dwelled on when I was reading verse 11. This has to do with the benevolent part of His sovereignty, of His dictatorship. Judah did this, just like Israel in the wilderness, even though everything that God had done had been designed for their good. It was so easily seen too. With all the blessings and all the miracles that He had performed, and still they just refused, they rejected it.

Human nature is really perverse, isn't it? Even though all the blessings are there before our eyes, we don't want to submit. It's sad, really. Do you think that this attitude is just an Old Testament attitude? Sorry . . .

Matthew 17 is a time when Jesus Christ Himself showed that this attitude had not changed from the Old Testament to the New. Matthew 17, and we'll start in verse 14. This is the situation when a boy, who was demon possessed, was brought to His disciples and they couldn't do heal him.

**Matthew 17:14-16** And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him."

Listen to Jesus' response:

**Matthew 17:17-20** Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me." And Jesus rebuked the

demon, and he came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast him out?" So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief . . .

Your unbelief. The disciples' unbelief!

**Matthew 17:20-21** . . . for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

This was the Twelve He was talking to, the ones that later became the apostles. He got angry at them and called them faithful and perverse! They couldn't do the works of God because they didn't believe! "How long will I bear with all this unbelief?" He probably felt like He was surrounded by a pack of fools, at times.

Here He was preaching to them daily, who knows how many times a day. They saw how many thousands of people cured, healed, how many demons cast out, how many other types of miracles He did, walking on the water, multiplying food . . . but they still didn't believe. Not enough to put it into application.

He says here if you don't have faith, you don't have the foundation to submit, it's because you won't submit, that you can't cast this demon out. You don't have the faith that's even the bedrock of that.

So if we truly believe what He says, then we will do as He says. The Christian religion is not one of just believing. It's one of *doing*. It's one of *applying*. Intellectuals do not do well in Christianity, because they want to understand, but they don't want to do. There's a lot of vanity that has to be overcome in intellectuals. Because Christianity is an immanently practical religion that starts with faith and ends in works. Just read James. "I'll show you my faith by my works."

It didn't end here. Mark 16 is after Christ's resurrection and ascension. This is how far the disciples' unbelief went. This is just before He gives them their commission. This is the prelude to giving the commission to the apostles.

**Mark 16:14** Afterward He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, [listen to why] because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

Mary Magdalene and the other women who went to the tomb and saw that He was not there. Mary Magdalene, who had *seen* Him, and He had said, "Go, tell the disciples, especially Peter, that I have risen." And they did not believe until they saw Him. Thomas had to reach in and touch Him before he believed.

**Mark 16:15-16** And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature [after He had rebuked them]. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

Pretty strong words there from our God. They did not believe the eyewitnesses testimony regarding His resurrection.

This begins to take things beyond God Himself. Think about it. God said they should have believed even those He had sent with His word. The word of God, at that point, was Jesus saying, "I have risen." And they would not believe it from the mouths of the women who had eyewitness testimony that this was the case. That starts to bring matters a little bit closer to home, in our day and age.

Let's go to Luke 10, verse 13. This was His upbraiding of the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida.

**Luke 10:13-15** "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented a great while ago, sitting

in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven [that's where Jesus lives], will be thrust down to Hades."

Because they didn't believe all the signs and wonders that had been done, all the preaching that had been done. These were cities of the Jews, part of the chosen people. And they had Christ in their midst working miracle after miracle, and Jesus pretty much had enough, so He cursed them. Verse 16, listen to the end of this:

**Luke 10:16** He who hears you [speaking to His disciples] hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.

If someone rejects a servant of God, who is speaking the truth, God's word, Jesus says He might as well have rejected Me and My Father also. It goes right back up the line. Very serious words there.

He was training twelve disciples to take His words to the ends of the earth and they, in that chain of truth (let's call it), had the same authority while they were speaking those words. He says, "If they reject you they reject Me and My Father"—because it's the Father who puts the words in the Son's mouth. It goes all the way up the ladder.

Now, this is not a very popular thing, that God's ministers, God's servants, should be submitted to, is it? Not in today's day. "I'll never follow another man," we've heard many say. Well, you don't follow the man for his sake. You follow him for the truth that he speaks. You don't need to submit to God's ministers as men, but to the *truth* that they bring, the truth that they speak.

What are we? What are God's ministers? We're vessels of clay, like you, but we've been given a mouth and words to fill them. And by the grace of God, they're God's words. They're not some piddling idea of smoke from our own minds. It all rests on the foundation of faith in his own, with the minister's own, relationship with God. That's what God's ministers have been designed to do. To bring the truth to guide the people of God to the Kingdom.

That's our work, such as it is. It's our only work, really, so long as we speak the truth. But it's important because if you reject the word of God out of the mouth of whoever it is, Jesus says you reject Him and you reject the Father. Those are serious things to contemplate.

Let's go to I Corinthians 1 and see Paul echoing something along this line. We'll start in verse 10:

**I Corinthians 1:10-11** Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ [he's calling upon the authority here, God's name], that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.

Rivalries, schisms. He was afraid for them, because what this was doing was dividing the church, pitting one family against another. They were dividing into factions. "I'm for Peter, I'm for Paul, I'm for Apollos, I'm Christ's man." And Paul says this shouldn't be. We all have to speak the same thing. It's not the people, the leaders, but the truth that we should be following. He says, "I'm glad I didn't baptize any of you because you'd be all in my bandwagon. I don't want that," he says. We need to be united in the truth, in the gospel. Let's go down to verse 17.

**I Corinthians 1:17** For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words . . .

Not out of my own intellectual well of reserve that I can quote these great, long literary passages and be able to speak poetry at the drop of the hat, whenever I like it.

**I Corinthians 1:17-18** . . . lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. [That's not what drives things.] For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

The truth is the power. The gospel is the power of God.

**I Corinthians 1:19** For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

All this worldly wisdom isn't going to matter a hill of beans in the end.

**I Corinthians 1:20-21** Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? [Where are these intelligent people?] Where is the disputer of this age [the great debaters]? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? [Of course He has.] For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

Do you understand what he's saying here? That maybe God could have come up with a different way to make us His children. Maybe. I don't know. But God chose the foolishness of preaching (as it says in the King James), this method, this manner, to preach through men His truth, and by that, those who believe will be saved.

Why did He do it this way? There might be all kinds of answers, but it's through this foolish medium of preaching that He decided He was going to get His message to the world. And not only that, but by that message He would call some of you. Those of you, by the same message, would learn the precepts, the principles, and grab the vision of what it takes to be saved.

What do we have to do? Submit to it. We have to swallow our pride even though we may think that this way of doing things is awfully foolish. Even though the person who may be giving the truth isn't somebody you'd like to be your next door neighbor, necessarily, if he's preaching the truth, we have to follow him. Of course, we can see by judging the fruits, by comparing it with God's word, whether that's the case. But the mouth is nothing. It's the words that come from the mouth that are important. We may not like the messenger, but the message is all important.

And, unfortunately, this has led to the martyrdom of many of God's servants. How many of the apostles died cruel deaths of people who did not like them?

No, they probably thought they were pretty chummy people, once they got to know them in jail. What didn't they like? It was *kill the messenger*, so the message would not go out.

Eleven of the twelve apostles died martyrs' deaths. And you know, one of the emperors tried to kill John too. Legend has it that he was thrown in boiling oil and survived, evidently not even touched. So he exiled him to Patmos and God used that to give us the book of Revelation. He wasn't done with John, but it was the *message* that was so offensive. And with our carnal, perverse human nature it can still be at times very offensive. But we have to get rid of our pride and submit to it.

We have to be discerning, of course. We must know creatures by their fruits. John says to discern the spirits. That's perfectly well and good. But if it proves to be God's word that the preacher preaches, then woe to us when we refuse to submit to it.

Now what is submission? I've gone on a long time here about how paramount it is that we submit. In the New Testament there are two Greek words—they're actually related words, one's the noun, one's the verb—for submit. Sometimes it's translated as "subject." But it's *hupotasso*. That's the verb. And the other is *hupotage*. That's the noun. Literally, this is a military term. *Hupotasso* means to arrange under. (Remember that we went over this in that child rearing sermon three months back, on submission.) It means to arrange under, or maybe a better way to understand it is to rank below.

In the military, they have ranks. If you're general, if you're commander in chief, you don't rank below anyone. In the military, you don't have to submit, necessarily, to anyone if you're the commander in chief.

Now, even generals in our armies rank below the commander in chief and colonels rank below them, and majors rank below them, and captains below them, and lieutenants below them, and then sergeants, and then privates. Everybody ranks below (that's the Civil War military if you'd like to know, I don't know if it's the same way now) someone else, so there's order. If everybody knows who they must submit to, then things go pretty smoothly and they are able to take this war to the enemy.

A sovereign like God is the highest rank, obviously. He's sovereign or sovereigns. King of kings and Lord of lords. And the rest of us rank below Him, definitely. Our duty then, because we rank below, is to submit. Or if we want to use the other definition, our duty is to arrange ourselves under Him in a way that pleases Him and brings the best results. Of course, the best results are eternal life and entrance into God's Kingdom.

Did you notice something about that definition of submission that I just gave? To arrange ourselves. What does that tell you? That submission under God is voluntary for us. *We* decide to submit. God very, very rarely forces anyone to submit to Him. Maybe you can find just a handful of circumstances in the Bible where that actually occurs. I can think of Jonah. But He let Jonah decide, really. Jonah ran away, but God worked circumstances out so eventually he did submit.

God has the power to force us to submit, but He very infrequently uses it, because that doesn't produce the desired results. Thus we have Deuteronomy 30:19, where God gives us a command. He says on the one hand there's life and on the other hand there's death. So go ahead, choose. And He says, "My recommendation is to choose life. If you choose life, you'll have blessings. But if you go ahead and decide to choose death, well, you get death. That's the choice. Now choose."

When we submit then, at that point, we've chosen life. We have a choice when it comes to submitting to God and His word. However, if we choose to rebel (which is our choice), destruction and death are the end. And not just death in the physical sense, but the second death as well.

Human sovereigns force submission. They subject their people. It's interesting that subject is an English word and it means to throw under. I get the impression in my mind of a carriage going down the street, and there's somebody on the side of the road, and he's got somebody by his collar and breeches, and he's throwing him under the wheels. I'll bet their subjected to something—to the wheels of that carriage.

You know, human sovereigns are very quick to punish the people mercilessly for their rebellion. They make them grovel, at the very least. They'll throw them in jail. They'll confiscate their lands and their goods.



They'll send them into exile for not submitting. Hang them by the neck until dead, stand them before a firing squad, or send them to Madame Guillotine to chop off their heads. This is often very effective in quelling rebellion. The headless don't rise up in revolt. But it's hardly rehabilitative, is it? There's no second chance when you're at the end of a rope, hanging.

Let's go back to Exodus 34 and we'll look at God at this juncture. This is the time when Moses asked God to let him see Him. What happened was, God said, "Okay, I'll stand you here in this cleft of the rock and you can see My backside. But while you're looking at My backside, I'm going to preach you a sermon about who I am, because you need to know."

This was just after the incident with the golden calf, so things were not great among the camp of Israel at this point. God was still somewhat angry, but by this time He had calmed down a bit, He turned the situation into a chance for Moses to learn, and the rest of us as well. Verse 5:

**Exodus 34:5-9** Then the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. [Now listen to what He says.] And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. Then he said, "If now I have found grace in Your sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us, even though we are a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance."

There's the meekest man in all the earth coming to an understanding of what kind of God he worshipped and relying on those (let's call them "softer") qualities that God had just named to him. Merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

He saw that with God, He gives you a lot of rope to hang yourself with and that His mercy endures forever. He saw that God's softer qualities, in many cases, outweigh the harsher ones, because He wants rehabilitated sons and daughters. He doesn't want to have to chop their heads off. He'll do it if it's necessary. How many hundreds of thousands died in the wilderness, or millions I should say? But, He would much rather have mercy, He would much rather see repentance.

So He tells Moses, and all of Israel through Moses, that He will give them a second chance to amend their ways, though they stumble and fall from time to time. (Now this was before the incident in Numbers 14.) But they continued to rebel, and to complain, and murmur. But at this point He was still longsuffering with them and willing to forgive, willing to give them a chance to rehabilitate.

Let's go to II Peter 3:9. This is probably a memory scripture for some. I know every time I say that I have people come up to me and say, "That wasn't a memory scripture."

**II Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

See, that's the way God looks at things. He takes a long term view. He wants to see us repent, so He'll take a long time, give us multiple mercies, and be gracious, while we continue to rebel. But He wants to see a change. And if rebelling goes on too long, like some speakers I know (on too long, that is [just kidding]), then He does have to take steps, but He would much rather be gracious and merciful.

But there is a danger in God's rehabilitative method, because we have carnal minds, that is. Go to Ecclesiastes 8. Here is the danger shown from Solomon. Verse 10 and Solomon says:

**Ecclesiastes 8:10** Then I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of holiness . . .

That's very interesting. They had been, maybe, holy at one point. Or let's say they had at least visited the temple.

**Ecclesiastes 8:10-13** . . . and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done. This also is vanity. [Now listen to what he says here.] Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

Because God delays His punishments of those who fail to submit, carnal men think they have gotten away with their sins. And what it does, it ends up hardening them to do more evil. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil.

Because we still have a great deal of carnality in us, we can react the same way. We can think that we've gotten away with something and not repent of it. We can continue in that sin and it just piles up, until God would have enough. Then He'll act and we'll say, "What's this for?" because our heart has been hardened against that sin. We don't even consider it a sin anymore, probably.

That's the danger in God's method. But in the long run it works for those who have a soft heart, who are really trying to do what is right. If we begin living that way though, where our heart starts to become hardened, we're forgetting the balancing parts of God's nature. Go to Romans 11, where Paul was talking about the olive tree. What he's talking about is God's rejection of Israel. That's what this starts with.

Verse 1 says, "Has God cast away His people?" And Paul says, "Certainly not," because he, himself, was an Israelite. But he gets down further into the argument here, talking about the Gentiles being grafted in in their place. Now listen to what he says, starting in verse 19:

**Romans 11:19-20** You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." [Kind of getting a little bit of a superior attitude here.] Well said. [Paul said "that's true."] Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. [Remember we talked earlier about how important faith is to all this.] Do not be haughty, but fear.

Remember Solomon, there in Ecclesiastes 8, talked about the way we have to do this is to fear God, that it will be well with us if we fear. Because why?

Therefore consider the goodness . . . of God.

Is that what it says? Well, it does say that, but I left out two words. Let me read verse 21 first.

**Romans 11:21** For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God. . .

See, we have to remember the other part of His nature. He is a good God. As a matter of fact, the word "good" comes from the word "God" in English. But there are other parts of His nature where He can appear severe, because He will not tolerate sin. He will have nothing to do with it.

**Romans 11:21-22** . . . On those who fell [meaning those who did not stand anymore on faith], severity; but toward you, goodness [at this point they're still standing on faith], if you will continue in His goodness. . .

**That's a threat**, that if we don't continue in His goodness, upon us the severity could very well fall.

**Romans 11:22** . . . Otherwise you also will be cut off.

Paul does not pull any punches here. We need to *fear* lest our stand by faith erodes and God allows His severity to fall on us for failure to keep the covenant. If He took this course of action with Israel, His natural olive tree,

what's to stop Him from dealing this way with us who have been grafted in from the outside?

What we see here is that the God of the Old Testament who dealt with Israel in the wilderness, the way He dealt with Judah, the way He sent them into exile beyond the Euphrates, is the same God of the New Testament. How many times do we see in the Bible (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8): "I change not. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and forever."

So where's that leave us? Are we doomed by our human nature to fall? No. But we have to get control of it, because who knows how long we can count on God's mercy once we begin to sin? It's a crap shoot, isn't it? Once you begin to sin, how long will God allow His grace to cover us? Does not the Bible say that when we transgress we fall under the penalty of the law? It's very obvious. So how long until we fall completely from God's grace? And do we not stay in a state of grace by refraining from sin? Isn't that the way we do it? Our part of staying free of sin consists of submitting to God. It all comes back to submission.

Now why is submission so important? Why is submission so important right now? Another memory scripture.

**I Peter 4:17-19** For the time has come for the judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear? Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

This is our crisis. Our judgment literally is a time of decision, a period of testing, a period of evaluation when all things will be decided. That sentence, "against an evil work," that was commuted for such a long time, hasn't ended in this period of judgment. Notice though how pessimistic Peter is here about our chances. If the righteous one is *scarcely saved*. We'll be saved by the skin of our teeth because of that awful human nature we have that keeps pulling us down and tells us to rebel instead of submit. We don't pass this

test with flying colors. None of us do. That's scary to think that we're on the razor's edge all the time, battling our carnal nature on the one hand and trying to put on God's character on the other. Scary.

What does the apostle suggest we do? Commit your souls to Him in doing good. The word picture here is very insightful. Commit in the Greek is a banking term or a financial term. It means, in our language, deposit. Like you're depositing money at the bank or you're depositing something in trust of another person to use at their discretion. Let's say you set up a trust with a trustee. The trustee is the one you give discretion to over that trust.

This word can be translated as to a trust, or to consign, or to authorize another to act on one's behalf. So what is Peter telling us to do? Submit to God! When we entrust everything to Him, we are submitting to Him. We are giving God the authority to act on our behalf. We're consigning over to Him our rights. It's not something that people who've grown up in a democracy like to hear. But this is no democracy under God. This is a benevolent dictatorship. He's sovereign and we submit.

This is exactly what James and John and Jude all say throughout these general epistles here. You can go through it. I just want to pick up one:

**James 4:6** But He gives more grace. Therefore He says, "God resists the proud [the rebels], but gives grace to the humble [those who submit]."

So James says in verse 7:

**James 4:6-7** Therefore submit to God. [That's what you need to do.] Resist Satan and he will flee from you.

You can go through these general epistles and they all say pretty much the same thing. This is the time to submit. This is our day of judgment. Let's go over a few pages to Revelation 11. This is why we need to do this. Verse 15:

**Revelation 11:15-18** Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world

have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God saying, "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come [that's YHWH], because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth."

This is the Day of Trumpets, a day in which we believe this event will take place. We could go back to I Corinthians 15:50-54 and I Thessalonians 4:13-18 where it says the trumpet shall sound and those who are dead in Christ shall rise and the rest of us will rise, too, to meet them in the air, those who are living at that time. This is the same time. The seventh trump being sounded, the time of Christ's return. Our judgment will have ended at that point, so that gives you a terminus. Who knows when that terminus is. We hope and have been hoping for years that it would be very soon.

But there is a danger in it coming very soon, because have we done all it takes to submit and to prove to God that we will submit? If we fail to submit, our end is the lake of fire. If we submit, two things will happen. We will either be taken as martyrs and die and have a glorious future in the kingdom, or we will live through all that mess at the end and rise to meet Christ in the air and also have a glorious future. But the choice is ours.

Let us end in Psalm 95. It is very interesting . . . if you want to go between Psalm 95 and Psalm 100, they are all early millennial psalms. Here in Psalm 95 we are going to look at the contrast here:

**Psalm 95:6-11** Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice: "Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, 'It is a people who go astray in their

hearts, and they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath,  
'They shall not enter My rest.'"

Let us go to Psalm 100 for the other side of the coin. Verse 1:

**Psalm 100:1-5** Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!  
Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with  
singing. Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us,  
and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His  
pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts  
with praise. Be thankful to Him and bless His name. For the LORD is  
good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all  
generations.

Which will we be? The ones who fail to submit and end up outside the gates,  
because we will harden our hearts and be rebellious like Israel? Or will we  
be like these people, the sheep of His pasture, who enter His gates with  
praise, knowing that He is God.

If we do our part in submitting to His benevolent and loving sovereignty, we  
will enter His rest. Submission to God is good.

Have a very wonderful day of Trumpets.