

# **THE SUBMISSION PARADOX**

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**Sermon in a sentence:** We submit to God and each other because it is right and pleasing in His eyes. Paradoxically, these acts of submission lead to greatness.

**Scriptures:** Phil. 2:5-11; Luke 22:42; 1 Pet. 2:13-17; Heb. 12:9-10; James 4:7; Eph. 5:21; Col. 3:22-24

**Submission is the act of yielding to the position, role, power and authority of another, in obedience and compliance.**

**To be pleasing to God, submission needs to come from a willing heart, more than from just acting in rote obedience. We must have:**

- **An UNDERSTANDING of whom we are submitted to – beginning with the almighty God! He has the right to do whatever He pleases with us. We need to be like clay in His hands. \* (See Appendix) \***
- **FAITH that His way is best! Not just another alternative. Not subject to our intellectual understanding. Not requiring our approval. Submission to His way is the best possible outcome for our lives.**
- **PLEASURE in the privilege of having the will of God performed in our lives (2 Cor. 12:7-10).**
- **JOYOUS anticipation of the future God has in store for us (Heb. 12:2).**
- **CONFIDENCE that God is doing a “good work” in us (Phil. 1:6).**
- **LOVING the one we’re submitted to (Deut. 15:12-17; Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 5:3).**

We must understand that this joyous, faith filled, pleasurable, confident, reasonable **submission** is not only to an invisible God out there somewhere. It is **demonstrated most clearly and practiced most visibly in our interactions with each other.**

Let us consider a few biblical examples and injunctions:

- **Jesus, the Son of God was submitted to the will of His Father:**
  - ... **“Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.”** (Luke 22:42 NASB)
  - ... just as He says also in another *passage*, **“YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.”** 7 In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. 8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation (Heb. 5:6-9 NASB)
  
- **Men are subject to Christ, elders and civil government:**
  - But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man.... (1 Cor. 11:3a NASB)
  - Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time (1 Pet. 5:6 NASB)
  - You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders.... (1 Pet. 5:5a NASB)

- Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. 16 *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God. 17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king (1 Pet. 2:13-17 (Titus 3:1) NASB).

- **Wives are subject to their husbands:**

- *Wives, be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything (Eph. 5:22-24 NASB)
- In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior (1 Pet. 3:1-2 NASB)

- **Children are subject to their parents:**

- Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3 SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH (Eph. 6:1-3; (Col. 3:20) NASB)

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- **We all should submit to God:**

- Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7 NASB)

- Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness. (Heb. 12:9-10 NASB)
  
- Saints should be in submission to each other and to church leadership:
  - ... and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. (Eph. 5:21 NASB)
  - Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. (Heb. 13:17 NASB)
  
- Even servants and slaves were instructed to submit to their masters:
  - Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. (Col. 3:22-24 NASB)
  
  - ... Abram said to Sarai, “Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight.” So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence. Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. 8 He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from and where are you going?” And she said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.” 9 Then the angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her

authority.” 10 Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, “ I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.” (Gen. 16:6-10 NASB)

- *Urge* bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect (Titus 2:9-10 NASB)

Submission is a critical characteristic for each individual to develop, and one of the most important keys to success in *all* aspects of life!

Now here’s the paradox<sup>1</sup>: We would think that submission makes us weak, but instead it is like the asphalt that paves the road to success and greatness!

When a person is meek, humble, submissive and obedient, displaying a positive attitude, and acting with dignity and respect toward those in authority, (even when they clearly don’t deserve it), unexpected desirable outcomes occur.

The reward for having a proper attitude as we submit to others is, first and foremost, the joy of knowing we have done the right thing, despite our circumstances! (Consider Naaman’s slave girl who was in submission to her master, doing what was best for him, because it was the right thing to do. She did not seek a reward, but simply wished in her heart that her master would follow her suggestion to avail himself of the prophet’s power to heal (2 Kings 5)).

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<sup>1</sup> A paradox is a statement or proposition that, despite sound (or apparently sound) reasoning from acceptable premises, leads to a conclusion that seems senseless, logically unacceptable or self-contradictory.

One of the best examples of how this principle works comes from the life of Joseph (Gen. 37-41). He was hated by his brothers and sold into slavery, wrongfully accused by his slave owner's wife and thrown into jail. As he demonstrated all of the characteristics listed above, God Himself orchestrated an incredible series of events that culminated in his promotion to Prime Minister of Egypt!

David the shepherd to David the king is another great example from the book of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel.

From the same book we read the story of Saul, the first king of Israel, who allowed pride and disobedience to overcome him, becoming a stark example of how things can quickly fall apart when we leave these principles behind.

Of course, the greatest example of all is detailed in the life of our Lord Jesus, whose story is summarized in the 'Christ hymn' of Philippians:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; 11 And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:5-11 KJV)

**We have no greater example of One who endured every injustice humanity has devised, willingly submitting Himself to the will and plan of God, even at the cost of His own life. Because of this, God highly exalted Him!**

**How should we then live?**

**Begin, or continue to do what we know is right, in full submission to God, His word, His servants, our human masters, and each other.**

**In His own way and in His own time, the Lord will give us the rewards of submission.**

**APPENDIX:**

**Dr. Sam Sasser who wrote The Potter's Touch (Destiny Image Publishers, Philadelphia , PA), describes the 7-step process of pottery making in the following abbreviated form:**

- 1. The clay is selected - many grades are available (Is.64:8)**
- 2. It is trodden under foot - to take the air out (Is.41:25)**
- 3. It is washed (mixed) with water - to soften it.**
- 4. It is kneaded by hand - to remove small rocky pieces until the potter can mold and shape it into a smooth, beautiful vessel.**
- 5. It is dried by the sun until 30% of its water content is lost.**
- 6. It is dried in a kiln where intense heat is applied until it shrinks to 80% of its original size. (Different temperatures are needed to expose the quality and color of differing types of clay.)**



- 7. It is marked and tagged - each vessel bears the potter's trademark, but only the "chosen vessel" receives his signature.**

**The clay must always be submissive to the potter or it will never become a vessel of honour, to be used for a higher purpose (Jer. 18:1-10).**