

## **Here comes *Submission***

Does it seem ironic to you that a religion whose name means *submission* is wreaking havoc with Christians all over the world, and disturbing the calm of Western Christendom, a Christian force that has trouble with that very thing, submitting. Subjecting itself. Humbling itself. Lowering itself. Obeying. Let's take a look from the Scriptures at what submission was supposed to be.

### **The Greek.**

There are several Greek words that spell out the New Testament teaching on submission. As in English, the family of words involved can be used interchangeably. Hupaike, Hupatage, Hupakoe, Hupandros. Surrender, subject(ion), submit, submission, obey, be under obedience to,.

You'll notice the prominence of "Hup" and "sub", in the Greek and English respectively. Both mean *under*. An awful word to us. Me under you? Us under them? Unthinkable! But under is the word, and under is the idea. There's no other way to look at Biblical submission. Luke (Jesus), Paul, Peter, and James all weigh in on the subject, and we need to listen to them all.

### **Jesus.**

Let's start with a look at Luke 10:17-20. Behold some excited disciples! They have just discovered that they are able to control demons! The powers of the other world are theirs for the commanding. Evil spirits are "under" them.

"Lord, even the demons are *subject* to us in your name!" We can cast out devils. It's wonderful. Thank you Jesus!

We hear a lot of this today. Some of it is for real, don't get me wrong. But much of it is little Christians trying to be big Christians, to show their "stuff" as it were. They will cast out demons of anger, and jealousy, and bitterness, before even researching the "patient" to see if maybe he has a flesh problem and not a "spirit" problem. Demons are everywhere for these people. Find a person acting less than saved, and the target is ready for their special brand of deliverance.

Power. We love power. We love to know that something is *subject* to us. Something is *under* us. Don't tread on me! I'm in charge here. This kind of submission is out there and abounds and is in many cases worthless. And it clouds the real need for *real submission* of the Biblical sort. The true spiritual submission.

Jesus did not deny the fact that we have power over devils. But He did put things in order.

"Do not rejoice that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." There's the real power. Heavenly citizenship, heavenly credentials. Looking like Jesus, acting like Jesus.

Let's follow some other submission passages in the order of their Biblical appearance:

### **The government**

Rom 13:1,5, "Let every soul be *subject* to the governing authorities... whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God...and will bring judgment on themselves..."

There he is again. Paul the radical. Paul the teacher that gets under your skin. Always saying stuff I don't want to hear. Things that belong in another era.

No. Submission, whether to the President or to the local police, is in, as long as Paul is a Spirit-filled apostle of Jesus Christ. As long as we consider his epistles the very word of God. I still do.

There is simply no excuse for breaking the laws of men that do not break the laws of God. There is nothing holy and spiritual in speeding. Cheating on your taxes. Littering the streets. I know there are things the authorities command that are actually laws of God first. Those should be easy to obey for Christians. I'm not talking about those moral laws. I'm talking about laws that mess with our convenience and our assumed personal "rights." But here, God says you have no rights that He does not give you *through the government*.

God is testing our ability to obey every time we drive down the street. Why do we feel it is OK to break laws routinely? Because we usually get away with it? How do we teach our children to obey our laws if we consistently defy the higher powers? And they are the higher powers, says the Lord. You are "under" them. Live with it. Get over your pride and Western sense of independence and self-governing that even makes the Word of God ineffective in your life. You aren't guilty when you get caught. You are guilty when you disobey. So obey. Submit. That's God's will for your life! (See I Peter 2:13 for confirmation of this principle by another Spirit-filled apostle)

So, submission bothers you? Check out Paul again in I Corinthians 15:28. There Paul tells the known fact that the Father has put everything *under* (there it is again) the feet of Jesus. But it goes on to say that the Son is *under* the Father. What a humbling idea for us to drink in. That our Lord *submits* Himself to Someone. Even Jesus the Master of all becomes *subject* to One, "that God may be all in all."

Submission then is what allows the power over us to be the power through us. Power works when submission works. Power is meant to bless. Authority and rules are *good things*. When we submit to them, when Jesus even submits to the Father, nothing but God is produced. God fills the submitted one.

The Living Word became a man. As a man, He is asked to submit, as all men are asked. He becomes our example. When we follow that example, there is a "trickle-down" effect of blessing. The Father fills the Son, the Son fills us, we even are sources of filling for those who submit to us, and on and on.

The coming Kingdom will *not* be American-style democracy, with "the people" in charge. When Jesus rules the Earth it will be a tight-fisted but love-giving Monarchy, happily submitted to by all earthlings. Oh yes, submission is in our future, too. That's why it is important to be practicing submission now!

### **The brothers**

In I Corinthians 16:16 we read of a beautiful Christian family headed up by one Stephanas. They were the first converts to Christ in the Greek region known as

Achaia. No title is given. Thank God for that. Not an elder or deacon or bishop or pastor. Just a loving growing force for Jesus in their world. Paul's orders: *submit to them!* And not only to them. Submit to everyone who loves Jesus in this deep way. Submit, Paul says, to all my fellow workers while you're at it.

Here is a fresh way of looking at submission. It is not slavish groveling. It is recognition of Christ in another person or agency or even government. We love this Jesus. Whenever we see Him we want to serve Him and obey Him. That is submission. It's a good thing. It's a God thing. It's not to be taken lightly, but with a serious joy.

More of this general submission is mentioned in Ephesians 5:21. Christ is in His Body. So everyone we meet is worthy of us going "under" them in attitude. Do they have a need? Make it your priority. Serve them in His Name. Submit to one another. (See also I Peter 5:5)

### **Women at home**

But in the very next breath (5:22 & cf Colossians 3:18) he talks to wives, says the same thing, and women for centuries have been up in arms over it. Well, some women. Especially in our generation, and our part of the world. Suddenly it doesn't seem right to "submit." Suddenly it's a sexist thing, or even a woman-hater-Paul thing (Ever heard that one?).

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord." Here Paul stops to explain what he is talking about, and once more we need to listen. First he says that this submission is "as to the Lord." It's that same submission we have been talking about. My husband must be seen as the Lord Himself standing before me. How would I treat the Lord Jesus Christ? In fact the Lord Jesus Christ lives in my (Christian) husband. Should I not reverence such a one?

So far, nothing different is being said about this type of submission. The government, the church, the close friend in Christ, all are manifestations of Jesus in some measure or other, and we must submit to them all. And just as Paul carefully explained why we must submit to "the local police", he explains here

why it is crucial for a wife to submit to a husband, in case a woman wants to know why:

The husband is by nature the head of the wife in the same sense that Christ is the head of the church. In authority. In love. In appearance. In place. Here is given to us a perfect picture of the Church, and it is incumbent on men and women to play out their roles guided by the Spirit of God. Jesus/husbands leading by love and instruction. The church/wives following the lead and the love of their Lord. It works that way. It doesn't work the other way, except for outward appearance. People can "stay married" without God's order. But they can't be this picture they were intended to be unless there is submission.

Greek for a married woman is "upandros." There's "upo" again, and the whole word means "under a man." *The very meaning of marriage for a woman is submission.* This is the norm. This is the nature of things in God's real world. Today's un-submitted females are totally out of place, totally unnatural.

Peter gives another reason (I Peter 3:1-5) for women to submit to their husbands: It's a great evangelistic tool! Submission is attractive. Godly men, and even the ungodly, recognize true submission to Christ as a quality that is rare and precious. It makes them think. It makes them, in some cases, repent. Not a bad reward for a little killing of self.

### **Women at church**

I Timothy 2:11 brings the woman's responsibility from home to church, and the imagery remains the same. Women do not change in their relation to their own husbands when they enter the church fellowship. Paul says here that a woman is to be submitted, in silence, in the church, never thinking of teaching or ruling a man in public. Paul considers this behavior to be shameful because of the history of the Garden of Eden. In Christ, a loving husband makes submission much easier, and even the pain of childbirth is spoken of in language that allows us to know that a godly woman will be able to endure anything she has to endure. But submission is still the norm.

## **Children**

I Timothy 3:4 reminds us that, though the woman may be carrying the load at home, in terms of the work associated with a house and children, ultimately the responsibility for those things is Dad's. There must be no question at home as to the authority of the father, who stands there again, in the place of Jesus Christ. He is to be honored, revered, admired, respected. He is literally the lord of his home. A man who is incapable of leading his family in this way, says Paul, has no business taking authority in the church.

But we were speaking of submission. Children here and elsewhere are expected to give freely to Dad the honor he deserves because of the Christ in him.

## **Church leadership**

In Hebrews 13:17, the entire church is taught to surrender to the leadership of the body. Leaders stand before God and take full responsibility for those under their care. That is why it behooves all of us to give full cooperation to their guidance. Personal issues must be brought personally. The rebuke of a leader is to be unheard of. Fomenting a rebellion can be costly to the ringleaders. Our job is to obey so thoroughly, that with joy the pastors can go to God and give a good report, both now, and on that coming day.

## **General**

James 4:7 puts it simply in summary form: Submit to God. What His Word, His Spirit, His leaders, His governments, His family representatives, His people's needs, tell you to do, do it. You are under all of them, all the time. Stay under.

## **In the Work Place**

Where else does submission matter? Have we covered everything? In I Peter 2:18, the apostle mentions the work place. He talks of slaves and masters, but the employer/employee relationship can be taken from that discussion. What is his idea about those connections? Submission!

"Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh." Read it slowly. Think it out. The principle applies across the board, in all your other submittings! Submit. Submit with fear. Submit to the nice. Submit to the nasty. That opens a can of worms. I refuse to close it. I say to us all, deal with it. Just as it is written, deal with it. Stop trying to clean up Scriptures that are already clean before God.

"But I don't want to be a doormat." *Be a doormat* if that's what it means to obey this passage. Lay your life down, give it away, stop trying to defend your pride and follow your humbled Master to a cross, and die on it. And that, by the way, the cross of Jesus, is a doormat. A doormat with thorns and nails piercing.

### **Younger to Older**

I Peter 5:5 mentions yet another form of submission that the Lord would certainly delight to see more of in our day: submission of the younger to the older. In many cases the young have overrun the church. Old music is out. Old musical instruments are out. Old ways are out. Old *people* are out. Very painful things going on in the name of revival. And who can fight it? The argument is made that if we don't change, the young will go to some other church. And we can't have that, can we?

The youth need to be told that they have great ideas. They need to put those ideas into practice, in many cases. But the youth then need to be told to wait their turn for full leadership. If the older leaders need fresh ideas, let the young ones come along side and whisper in their ears. But to turn everything over to a young person when qualified mature men are still in the congregation is a travesty and sends the wrong message to a watching world.

No, old is good. Mature is even better. Younger people still need to submit to the older ones, and encourage them to continue on when they get discouraged by the symptomatic ailments of older age. Consider the kings and prophets of Israel, the apostles and leaders of the New Testament. Their expertise and wisdom were called on until the end. It is unnatural for the young to rule the old, and can be a sign of judgment, not a sign of health.

## Conclusion

So there you have it. The leaders of the Word of God have spoken, the conclusion is clear. God wants His people to submit, *to be under*. Those who rise up to be "over" will eventually be abased. Those who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God will eventually be lifted up (James 4:10).

The irony: Islam means submission. "Submission to the Divine will." Many Muslims believe, I am sure, that it is a personal submission, between themselves and their god. But the ones grabbing the headlines these days are those whose faith tells them that they must enforce this submission on all. This is not the Christian way, of course, but if Christians will not willingly submit to God's plan for their lives, if they continue to live in disobedience, as did Israel for those many years before and after the Kingdom days, is it conceivable that, also like them, believers will have to see God's hand turn against them, by a nation whose very name is "submission" ?

Perhaps it is time that we follow James' simple advice... "submit to God." Go under Him. Way under. Bow before Him like you are just meeting the Holy One of Israel for the first time, and start over. Then as Mary said, "Whatever He says to you, do it."