



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume VII
Issue 173

Submission: One to Another

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Ephesians 5:21).

The “S” word (submission) is rarely the topic of positive discussion in *contemporary* Christianity. That’s because the concept of submission itself has become a repulsive one in our *modern* age; but submission and authority are central issues in the spiritual conflict of the ages!

Biblical submission often has the misconception of inferiority, weakness, inequality, slavery or oppression. However, submission primarily describes the way a relationship is ordered or conducted. Submission does not mean that one person is less important or inferior to another. It is very important that we have this clear understanding that submission is *NOT AN ISSUE OF superiority* but one of *function*. Submission is the God-ordained way whereby individuals properly and orderly channel all of their abilities, ideas, wisdom, talents and education.

WHAT IS SUBMISSION?

The Greek word for “submitting” here in Ephesians 5:21 is the Greek word *hupotasso*.¹ It is a compound word: *hupo* meaning “under” and *tasso* meaning to *set under*, or to *set in order*.

Noah Webster² defined the various “S” words as follows:

Submit: “To surrender, to yield one’s person to the power of another; to give up resistance.”

Submitting: “Referring to another for decision.”

Submission: “The act of yielding to the authority of another” (yielding is defined, “to give up the contest, not to oppose,” while contest is defined, “struggle for victory, superiority; to dispute; debate”).

Submission then is the act of yielding to another; while yielding is an act of giving up the contest – not opposing. More than anything else, submission is a spirit conveyed; a humble attitude of the heart.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUBMISSION AND OBEDIENCE

Submission describes the way that a relationship is ordered or *conducted* (attitude); while obedience on the other hand describes *compliance* to the particulars (actions). So, one deals with attitude, while the other deals with actions.

Watchman Nee points out a distinction between submission and obedience:

Submission is absolute, but obedience is relative. Submission is a matter of attitude, while obedience is a matter of conduct (*Spiritual Authority*, p. 107).

(see **SUBMISSION**, page 1711)

1. *Strong's Greek Lexicon* #5293.
2. *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828.

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Dear Vessels of Mercy.

We sell used books to make a living. Every now and then we sell a book with an interesting story behind it.

We have sold a few used books to really famous people; or, at least they had famous names. Some did seem unmistakable though, like when we sent a book to John D. Rockefeller, IV in West Virginia; or, Paul Tagliabue in New York City.

We have sold books to universities, government agencies, courts and movie studios; one was ordered to be used in a movie. People are often looking for a cherished book as a child, or occasionally, one that their grandparents wrote or illustrated.

Today “Carol” called. In grief, she was on an unusual mission. She wanted to order a book to place in her father’s casket. The book was, *My Father Can Fix Anything* by Mabel Watts (Whitman, 1965). She shared how her father had read this book to them when they were little. It was a children’s book with sweet pictures, about a father who repaired all the broken things in his child’s little world. The reading of this book so many years ago was such a lasting and tender memory that she wanted to have this book in her father’s coffin with him when he was buried.

Clyde III took the order, and Nathan packaged it. We shipped it out overnight to her. Needless to say, it was a touching moment for us here; our eyes were getting misty. A father now still and silent; surely to be missed. A family in loss and sorrow; a hole left that could not be easily mended. All parts of the course of this earthly life.

How appropriate, though, was the title of the book: *My Father Can Fix Anything*. Although “Carol’s” father may have fixed many things in her childhood, he could not fix *this*. How cold and final death seems; but my own heart was

(see **EDITORIAL**, page 1715)

Bible Student’s Notebook[™]

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God’s abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God’s purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the “preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any “church,” “denomination,” “movement,” “organization,” “mission,” “creed,” “meeting,” “school,” “conference” or “fellowship.”

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He goes on to say,

When delegated authority (men who represent God's authority) and direct authority (God Himself) are in conflict, one can render submission but not obedience to the delegated authority.

1. Obedience is related to conduct: it is relative. Submission is related to heart attitude: it is absolute.

2. God alone receives unqualified obedience without measure; any person lower than God can only receive qualified obedience.

3. Should the delegated authority issue an order clearly contradicting God's command, he will be given submission but not obedience. We should submit to the person who has received delegated authority from God, but we should disobey the order which offends God. (*Spiritual Authority*, pp. 108-110)

THE MANIFESTATION OF TRUE SUBMISSION

*"And He [Jesus Christ] went down with them [Joseph and Mary], and came to Nazareth, and was **subject unto them** ..." (Luke 2:51).*

This is the ultimate example of submission. The nature of true scriptural submission can clearly be seen here. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself operated under submission.

Did this mean that He was *inferior* to Joseph and Mary? No!

Did this mean that they were *better* than He? No!

Therefore, biblical submission has *NOTHING* to do with inferiority and superiority, but with divinely established function!

SUBMISSION IS A PRODUCT OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Notice what comes before our passage in its context:

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit ... Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God (Ephesians 5:18, 21).

Submission then, according to our passage, is the expression of God's own nature and Spirit filling the believer. Submission is the very life of God living through the believer. It is the divine attitude, or spirit.

THE SPECIFICS OF SUBMISSION

This exhortation to submission is not just a general one. We are not simply to submit to *everyone*; this would be chaos – and dishonoring to God. Instead Paul says that we are to submit "*one to another*." Then, so we would not miss the significance here, he goes on to detail, in very specific terms, exactly what "*one to another*" means.

The divine fullness of God's Spirit is manifested in submission in the following four specific areas:

Wives to Husbands

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife ... let the wives be [subject] to their own husbands in every thing" (Ephesians 5:22-24).

Believers to Christ

"Christ is the Head of the Church: and He is the Savior of the Body ... the Church is subject unto Christ" (Ephesians 5:23-24).

Children to Parents

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother" (Ephesians 6:1-2).

Servants to Masters

"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Ephesians 6:5-7).

These four areas of submission³ make up the total scope of the Spirit-filled Life. Submission is the God-ordained means of channeling all abilities, ideas, wisdom, and talents for His praise and glory. It represents the very course of Divine Life. ■

3. Along with their accompanying counterpoints of authority and responsibility (loving, cherishing, nurturing, forbearing, etc.).



Reader's Question Box #7

Heaping Coals of Fire

Q: This has bothered me for years and years.

“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:17-21).

Now maybe because I believed in a literal hell, I was confused by the fact that a believer should be motivated to be kind to an enemy because that is equal to “*heaping coals*” onto their head. Before, I used to think that it meant we would be rewarded for being good to those that do evil to us, and those “*evildoers*” were more so doomed to spend eternity in hell. These verses never sat right with me. What does this term “*heaping coals of fire*” mean in your opinion?

A: It is so amazing how our negative view of God flavors our reading of the Scriptures. It leads us to assume that the phrase “*heap coals of fire on his head*” is to be viewed in a negative light. We have been lead to do so by religious teaching. Rome used such passages as this to carry out their Inquisitions and burnings at the stake.

Many Protestant commentators have promoted their own negative view as well:

Coals of fire are doubtless emblematical of pain ... Burning coals heaped on a man's head would be expressive of intense agony. So the apostle says that the effect of doing good to an enemy would be to produce pain. – Albert

Barnes (1798-1870), *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*

By coals of fire heaped upon the head, others understand a sin-punishing fire. Thou shalt heap coals of fire, that is, the fire of divine vengeance, upon his head, by making his malice and hatred against thee more inexcusable. – William Burkitt (1650-1703), *Burkitt's Expository Notes*

Bring down the greater vengeance from God upon him. – Matthew Poole (1624-1679), *Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible*

You say that this passage has bothered you for “years and years,” and rightfully so, as this passage is a perfect example of how the Father alerts us to the error in our thinking. So, what is wrong with this picture?

We really need to ask ourselves, what does this passage mean in light of all that we know about the Father – of His ultimate victory in bringing all things into harmony with Himself, and using us as His vessels of mercy?

May I ask a simple question here? What would be the natural purpose of “*coals of fire*”? For instance, if I was to have “*coals of fire*” in my own home, would I do so for a *negative* purpose, or for a *positive* one? Would my purpose be for punishment? For shame? For destruction? To produce guilt? To produce pain? No, of course not. A wise man would use “*coals of fire*” in his home for none of these reasons. He would use it to warm his home. Why should we think any different about its use here? Is not our life of goodness and kindness designed by the Father to “warm up” those with whom we share His life? He uses us as instruments of kindness to warm the coldness, and melt the hardness of their hearts.

(see **QUESTION**, page 1714)

*"We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, 'I believed, and therefore have I spoken;' **we also believe, and therefore speak**" (II Corinthians 4:13).*

Thinking Outside of the Box

by – Richard "Rick" Lemons

God chooses who He may. It's up to us as individuals to study and prove all things to show ourselves approved – approved only to God. Whether we do or not won't change our position in Him. I am chosen in Christ and could be stuck in the cauldron of religious dogma, but still be His chosen child.

I'm relating this to my own past experiences as a child. At the age of 7 I felt the urge, call, leading (whatever it was) to be with God, to get close with God. Yet I never had any good direction from others, and received a lot of misdirection. I stayed in the church of my family until the age of 16, not receiving any real spiritual food for growth.

We know from life in general, that if something doesn't get fed it doesn't grow, but remains stunted. I was so fed up with this type of religious activity that I never wanted anything else to do with it. However, I continued to want to know God and who He was and what it was He was doing. I kept Him close in my heart, but wasn't willing to allow myself to become another church's patsy.

It wasn't until I was almost 24, through several close friends (my wife being one of them) whom God "suddenly" brought into

my life, when I really started to acknowledge the things of Scripture. These friends worked and prayed with me and for me, that I may receive understanding. I have grown a lot over the years; changing this understanding and my convictions as I received more light on the Scriptures.

Now, knowing the things that have been revealed to me, I would not want to spend a lot of time in fellowship with my old self, knowing how argumentative I would be when someone challenged a conviction that I had for something. However, this is but one reason why we as believers need to be tolerant and patient with others: that your speech may be by Grace seasoned with salt, not to shun the person. You don't have to accept his convictions. His Sin can be overlooked; but love and believe in the person, knowing that God one day will shower grace on him also.

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe (1749-1832) said it well with this statement:

"Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they are capable of being."

I need to learn this attitude.

The Methodist commentator Adam Clarke (1760-1832), wrote fittingly regarding this passage:

Thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head – not to consume, but to melt him into kindness; a metaphor taken from smelting metallic ores.

Here is what another has written regarding the true nature of this passage:

An enemy in distress, instead of calling for hate and vengeance, is a special opportunity for the display of God's grace. The "morsel," a special portion of food with which a host favored an honored guest, was a token of esteem and consideration. Mercy might provide an enemy with food, but grace accompanies the gift with every mark of love and honor. This is the way in which God vanquished our enmity, hence we should do likewise. – A.E. Knoch (1874-1965), *Concordant Commentary* (1968)

Speaking to the broader theme of the passage, others have written:

Does this rob God of anything? Not even of revenge, for if bread to the hungry be the divine method of heaping coals of fire, so does God Himself revenge Himself upon His enemies by loving them! – Alan Burns (?-1929), *Is It of God?*

He tells us to pour coals of fire on our enemies' heads. Those coals of fire are love! (Romans 12:20) – Gary Amirault, *Tentmakers*

A Figure of Speech

Now what about the actual phrase "*heap coals of fire on his head*." What does this actually mean? We are told that this is a Jewish figure of speech that has, for the most part, been lost to the western mind:

Paul says that if we give food and drink to our enemies, we shall be heaping "*coals of fire on their heads*." To us this doesn't sound like forgiveness, but like taking vengeance. In the Bible lands almost everything is carried on the

head – water jars, baskets of fruit, vegetables, fish or any other article. Those carrying the burden rarely touch it with the hands, and they walk through crowded streets and lanes with perfect ease. In many homes the only fire they have is kept in a *brazier* which they use for simple cooking as well as for warmth. They plan to always keep it burning. If it should go out, some member of the family will take the brazier to a neighbor's house to borrow fire. Then she will lift the brazier to her head and start for home. If her neighbor is a generous woman, she will heap the brazier full of coals. To feed an enemy and give him drink was like heaping the empty brazier with live coals – which meant food, warmth and almost life itself to the person or home needing it, and was the symbol of finest generosity. – B.M. Bowen, *Strange Scriptures that Perplex the Western Mind*

We, Westerners, usually picture vengeance when we think of pouring hot coals on someone's heads. The Semites pictured something completely different ... We, Westerners, must break some of our traditions, if we are to ever come to a deep understanding of the God of the Bible. It is full of beautiful pictures like this one. – Gary Amirault, *Tentmakers*

The phrase "*heap coals of fire on his head*" is a part of the quote from Proverbs 25:21-22. Farrar Fenton's (1903) translation of the passage in Proverbs takes the phrase "*heap coals of fire on his head*" in its literal meaning, thus explaining the Jewish figure of speech, rather than translating it:

"And a fire besides for his needs."

Although popular translations of this entire passage may often lead readers to a "punishment" view toward mankind,¹ we have actually been ►

1. Compare carefully the above listed text of Romans 12:17-21 from the *King James Version*, with the translation in the *Bible Student's Version*:

"Return to no one evil for evil. Display nobility before all men. If possible, as much as lies in you, cultivate peace with all mankind. Dearly beloved, don't retaliate, but recede from the place of anger: for it is written, 'Vindication belongs to Me; I will make it up to you,' says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink: for in so doing you will heap coals

instructed not to recompense “evil for evil” (Romans 12:17), but to “**overcome** evil with good” (Romans 12:21). This is the divine plan of the ages – “**overcome** evil with good” – for “love never fails!” (I Corinthians 13:8).

Jesus instructed His disciples to love their enemies and be a blessing to them:

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

On what basis did He do so? Because this is the very nature of the Father!

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

“God is love” (I John 4:8, 16), and His love has been “shed abroad in our hearts” (Romans 5:5), that we may “walk in love” (Ephesians 5:2), so that

of fire on his head. Don't be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good” (Romans 12:17-21). – BSV

EDITORIAL (continued from page 1710)

encouraged that, indeed, **My Father CAN Fix Anything.**

“Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14).

“Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?” (Jeremiah 32:27).

Our Father *can* fix *anything* – even death, the greatest of all man’s problems – the last great enemy of mankind.

“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (I Corinthians 15:26).

The only way to destroy death is by resurrection!

“The hour is coming, in the which all that

as the Father’s “vessels of mercy” (Romans 9:23) we would be a “blessing” to those around us:

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you ...” (Matthew 5:44).

“Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not” (Romans 12:14).

“Being reviled, we bless” (I Corinthians 4:12).

“See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men” (I Thessalonians 5:15).

“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing” (I Peter 3:9).

This is our “high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14)!

– Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

are in the graves shall hear his voice” (John 5:28).

The ultimate result is that our Father will fix even death,

*“And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be **All in all**”* (I Corinthians 15:28).

For surely, *My Father Can Fix Anything!*

Until next week,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.



Word Roots #1

An English Etymology of Biblical Words

Abound, Abundant, Abundance

“When things are in such profusion as to be like the waves of the sea overflowing the land, we may properly say that they *abound*. Literally, that is what the word means. It comes from the Latin, *abundo*, to overflow, from *ab*, from, and *unda*, wave, billow, surge.” – Charles Earle Funk (1881-1957), *Thereby Hangs a Tale* (1950)

When Paul spoke of “*abundant grace*,” he spoke of *overflowing grace*, the *profusion* of grace, the *surge* of grace.

Alone

“One who is *alone* is distinctly ‘one,’ not two or more. And that was the original intent and use of the word. It was formed from *all one*, wholly one, and was used as two words until the fourteenth century. In those days and until about the end of the seventeenth century the word one was pronounced just as we pronounce ‘own’ today. This pronunciation survives in ‘only.’” – Charles Earle Funk (1881-1957), *Thereby Hangs a Tale* (1950)

Atone, Atonement

“Nowadays when we are in full agreement or have a fellow-feeling with another, we say that we *see eye to eye*, or that we are *hand in glove* with him. Back in the thirteenth century and for the next several hundred years, the saying was to be *at one*, or to set *at one* with the other. The expression was so commonly employed that by the fourteenth century it was frequently written as a solid word, ‘atone.’ (The word ‘one’ was pronounced in those days as we pronounce ‘own.’) ... The noun atonement developed in similar manner from *at onement*, the condition of being *at one*. – Charles Earle Funk (1881-1957), *Thereby Hangs a Tale* (1950)

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