

Subjection Under God

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Transcript

By nature we are not in subjection. We are born into this world filled with the spirit of insubordination. As the descendants of our rebellious first parents we inherit their evil nature. "Man is born like a wild ass's colt" (Job 11:12). This is very unpalatable and humbling, but nevertheless it is true. As Isaiah 53:6 tells us, "we have turned every one to his own way" and that way is opposition to the revealed will of God. Even at conversion this wild and rebellious nature is not eradicated. A new nature is given, but the old one lusts against it. It is because of this that discipline and chastisement are needed by us, and the great design of these is to bring us into subjection to the Father of Spirits. We shall now attempt two things: explain the meaning of this expression "be in subjection unto the Father," and enforce this with reasons presented in our text.

I. The Subjection Designed:

To be "in subjection unto the Father" is a phrase of extensive import, and it is well that we should understand its various significations.

1. It denotes an acquiescence in God's sovereign right to do with us as He pleases.

See Psalm 39:9. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it". It is the duty of saints to be mute under the rod and silent beneath the sharpest afflictions. But this is only possible as we see the hand of God in them. If God's hand be not seen in the trial, the heart will do nothing but fret and fume. Read 2 Samuel 16:10,11. "And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, and let him curse for the Lord hath bidden him." What an example of complete submission to the sovereign will of the Most High was this! David knew that Shimei could not curse him without God's permission.

"This will set my heart at rest,

What My God appoints is best".

But with rare exceptions many chastenings are needed to bring us to this place, and to keep us there.

2. It implies a renunciation of Self-will.

To be in subjection unto the Father presupposes a surrendering and resigning of ourselves to Him. A blessed illustration of this is found in Leviticus 10:1-3, "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me and before all the people. And Aaron held his peace." They could grow forever by walking in constant communion with God and in obedience to His Word.

Consider the circumstances. Aaron's two sons, most probably intoxicated at the time, were suddenly cut off by Divine judgment. Their father had no warning to prepare him for this trial; yet he "held his peace"! O quarrel not against Jehovah. Be clay in the hands of the Potter. Take Christ's yoke upon you and learn of Him who was "meek and lowly in heart."

3. It signifies an acknowledgement of God's righteousness and wisdom in all His dealings with us.

We must vindicate God. This is what the Psalmist did. "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in Faithfulness has afflicted me" (119:75). Let us see to it that Wisdom is ever justified by her children. Let our confession of her be "righteous art Thou, O Lord, and upright are Thy judgments" (Ps. 119:137). Whatever is sent, we must vindicate the Sender of all things. The Judge of all the earth cannot do wrong.

The Babylonian captivity was the severest affliction which God ever brought upon His earthly people during Old Testament times. Yet even then a renewed heart acknowledged God's righteousness in it: "Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before Thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all Thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day. Howbeit Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for Thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly." (Neh. 9:32,33). God's enemies may talk of His injustice; let His children proclaim His righteousness. Because God is good, He can do nothing but what is right and good.

4. It includes a recognition of His care and a sense of His love.

There is a sulking submission and there is a cheerful submission. There is a fatalistic submission which takes this attitude—this is inevitable, so I must bow to it; and there is a thankful submission, receiving with gratitude whatever God may be pleased to send us. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes" (Ps. 119:71). The Psalmist viewed his chastisements with the eye of faith, and doing so he perceived the love behind them. Remember that when God brings His people into the wilderness it is that they may learn more of His sufficiency; when He casts them into the furnace it is that they may enjoy His presence.

5. It involves an active performance of His will.

Submission to the "Father of spirits" is something more than a passive thing. The other meanings to this expression which we have already considered are more or less of a negative character. But there is also a positive and an active side to it as well. To be "in subjection" also means to walk in His precepts and run in the way of His commandments. It means being submissive to His Word, our thoughts being formed and our ways being regulated by it. There is a doing as well as a suffering of God's will. God requires obedience from His children, a performance of duties. When we pray "Thy will be done" something more is

meant than a pious acquiescence in the will of the Almighty; it also signifies, May Thy will be performed by me. Subjection unto the Father of spirits, then, is the practical owning of His Lordship.

II. Reasons for this Subjection:

1. Because He is our Father.

It is but right and meet that children should be in subjection to their father. How much more so when we have such a Father! There is nothing tyrannical about Him; His commandments "are not grievous?" but are designed for our good. How profoundly thankful we should be that the great God now stands revealed as our "Father"! This is one of the distinctive revelations of the N.T. I very much doubt if Aaron or Eli, Job or David knew God in this relationship; yet they "submitted"! How much more ought we! May grace ever enable us to say with the Saviour, "the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it!" (John 18:11).

2. Because this is the secret of true happiness.

I believe that the force of the last two words in our text are "and be happy". The word "live" or "life" is used in this sense in Deut. 5:23 - note "prolong your days" is in addition. Such is its force in Psalm 119:116. It is the fretful, the murmuring and rebellious, who are miserable and wretched. Making the will of God our haven is the true resting place for our hearts. Our lives conformed to His will is the secret of contentment and joy. "Take My yoke upon you and ye shall find rest unto your souls," declared the Saviour. In keeping God's commandments there is great reward. "Great peace have they that love Thy law", said the Psalmist. May the Spirit of God work in all of us; the true spirit of subjection, even though it takes severe chastisement to effect it.

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