

## The Father-Son Relationship (Part 6)

### Strength for Submitting

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In the closing part of the previous sermon I had to break off while I was just about to get to a very important part of this series. Virtually all that I have given so far has been primarily aimed at giving us plenty of ammunition showing that the Father and the Son, though both God, are clearly two distinct beings who are not co-equal in their operations as the Trinity doctrine proclaims; thus I have been emphasizing their distinctiveness, the differences between the two. Their relationship and operations within the plan they are working out clearly reveal superior/inferior positions; not superior/inferior in terms of their nature, or what they are in their being, but superior/inferior in their operations within their plan.

The Bible shows that both are uncreated, and yet it also shows that the Father is the Source, the Son is the Means. The Father issues orders. The Son submits, is sent, and carries them out. The Father is in the background, unseen, inaudible, and vague to human apprehension. The Son is seen, heard, and revealing of the Father. The Son declares the Father is greater, that the Father gives Him the words to say, the judgments to make, and is the real Author and Power of His mighty works.

In all things the Son defers and submits to the Father. It can hardly be concluded that in all things they are co-equal. None of this eliminates the fact that Jesus had His own will. It is right at this very important juncture that much of the practical application of this whole series hits the road for us because, like Jesus, we too—each and every one of us—has our own will. We have been called of God, begotten by His Spirit in order that we be created in the likeness of Jesus Christ.

In John 17:3 Jesus stated that eternal life is knowing the Father and the Son. And in the Gospels especially, Jesus reveals the Father to a degree rarely touched on in the Old Testament, especially in terms of His intimate affection for us, His sacrificial attitude toward us, and His close involvement in every aspect of our lives.

The New Testament also reveals the Son in order that we might know Him as well as the Father. "To know" is to not merely to have knowledge of, but far more importantly it is to have an intimate relationship *with*—indeed not merely associating with, or fellowshiping with—but being a part of them, and they with us, as Jesus stated elsewhere.

Turn to John 17:20-26. Notice the subject here.

John 17:20 I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word.

He was speaking about the apostles. He is speaking about us—those who believe because of the

words that these men wrote. The purpose of the portion of the prayer is:

John 17:21-22 That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which you gave Me I have given them, that they may be one, just as We are one.

At least a major portion of "the glory" here is His word, His truth.

John 17:23-26 I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; [We could say that the *one* is one organization, one family, one church, one in mind; not one in being.] and that the world may know that you have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you gave Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me; for you loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love which with You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.

For those of us hoping to be part of the oneness of which Jesus speaks, it is particularly important for us to know the Son because He is our example for achieving a deep abiding relationship with the Father—the kind that He already had with the Father.

It is in the Son's submission to the Father that we see most clearly what God's will is for us. If we do this, God's purpose for us will be completed. We *will* go on to perfection. There is an important little scripture in regard to this in I Corinthians 11:1. Paul made this statement. He told these people:

I Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

This is the subject of this part of this sermon. It is following Christ's example.

As we were concluding that last sermon I went through several of Jesus' statements in several different contexts in which He clearly stated that He always did the Father's will, and that it was what He lived for. That, brethren, is our pattern now that we have been called if we are going to follow Him in our relationship with the Father. We need to ask another question right here, and that is, "How closely are we to follow Christ's example?" We have an answer for that in II Corinthians 10:3-5. What Paul says here seems to be an impossibly high, tremendous standard.

II Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strong holds. Casting down

arguments [or reasoning, or intent], and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

This could even be understood that we are to reach the point where our mind (if we understand this term right) is *enslaved* to doing what is right. We are to have made ourselves the servants of righteousness, or the slaves of righteousness. (This will come up just a bit later.)

Let us see a little episode in the life of Christ that gives us a foundation for the example that He set for us. We are going to go to Hebrews 10: 5, 7, 9. The overall subject here is sacrifice.

Hebrews 10:5 Therefore when He [Jesus] came into the world, He said, Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body have You prepared Me.

The reference to sacrifice and offering has to do not with Himself, but rather with the sacrifices that were done at the altar before the Temple, or the Tabernacle, and so God was setting them aside.

Hebrews 10:7 Then said I, Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book [meaning the Old Testament] it is written of Me—to do your will, O God.

Hebrews 10:9 Then said he, Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God. He takes away the first that He may establish the second.

As I said just briefly earlier, the whole context here involves the principle of sacrifice within God's purpose, and therefore the completion of His purpose. In other words, the purpose is going to be completed very largely because of sacrifice, but the focus at this point is on Jesus Himself.

In verse 7, the Greek grammar is better translated as "Lo, I *am* coming to do your will." The word picture is as if Jesus is making an announcement of His purpose as He was arriving on earth. Now we know that He did not literally do this, because He arrived on earth as a baby. But if you understand the intent of the context, then you understand why this is being said this way. This more correct grammatical association also indicates activity begun in the past, and it continues on indefinitely. In other words, He is saying, "I am coming to do what I began in the past, will do when I am here in the present, and will continue to do on and on indefinitely."

When you tie that to "coming to do His will," it means that He came to do God's will, including sacrificing His life for mankind's sins. He came to do God's will *before* mankind, thus setting an example for all to follow. He sacrificed His life so thoroughly that He would not permit Himself to sin in any circumstance at any time. His sacrifice was not just a one-time affair at His life's end. He was *always* submitting to the Father's will. The sacrificing not only provides a revelation of the Father to us, it also provides the reason for Christ's success in life and fulfilling His mission.

He has shown us by word example how to be successful in our relationship with the Father *and* the Son when our time comes to have the access to God, and this relationship opens to us. Do you want to be successful? This is how.

As His ministry continued, it underscored the reason for His coming. We are going to go back to the book of John again, the book where it so often says, "I came to do His will."

John 8:28 Then said Jesus to them, When you have lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.

This verse shows that the Father is the Source. The Father commands. The Son responds. The Son submits.

John 8:29 And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone; for I always do those things that please Him.

Pay a little bit of extra special attention as to why the Father was always with Him. "I always do those things that please Him." Jesus was always sacrificing Himself to do the will of God. This is the very pattern that we are to follow. I want to give you some confirming verses on this from the apostles. We will go I Peter.

I Peter 2:18-21 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear [or with all respect]; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. [That is quite a sacrifice, to do good, and get pain for it.] For what credit is it, when you are beaten for your faults, you shall take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.

If we are doing the right thing, that *is* God's will. But why the suffering? Why the suffering for doing what is right? Well, we know from Jesus' life that it happened. He did the right thing, and eventually died for it. There is a pattern there. Doing the right thing does not always mean that things are going, on the surface, to *appear* to be well. They might be quite painful, difficult to endure, and emotionally draining. There is a reason right within us as well, and it is human nature. Human nature will fight tooth and toenail to hang onto its turf and its turf is us.

Remember that the carnal mind is at war with God. Romans 8:7 says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." We have that to contend with all the time.

There are other forms of difficulty: discomfort, pain, and suffering. We are going to take a look at I Thessalonians 3:3-4. Paul is explaining about his affliction, which he mentions in verse 3.

I Thessalonians 3:3 That no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.

The "we" in this context is first of all Paul himself, and secondarily the entire ministry. The ministry is appointed to a certain level of suffering, but everybody is appointed to a level of suffering as well. That "we" there can easily be interpreted to include everybody who bears the truth and is living it; that is submitting to God's will.

I Thessalonians 3:4 For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we should suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.

They were witness to it.

Just so we are reminded what the stream of thought running through this is: we can do right and still face difficult, painful times. Somehow, that does not compute carnally as being fair, but if anything, Jesus is fair with us. He warns us that if we follow Him, there is going to be trouble. If you do right and well, it is not always going to go smoothly. He says He guarantees that it will work out right in the end, but on the way there will be some rough and rocky times.

Turn now to II Timothy 3:10-13. This is a personal letter from the apostle Paul to Timothy.

II Timothy 3:10-11 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

Hang onto that thought too. There is a reason for this suffering, and God is glorified in His deliverance of us if we will hang with it, faithfully trusting Him.

II Timothy 3:12-13 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

One does not have to be a minister, one does not have to be an apostle, an evangelist, or whatever, to suffer persecution and difficult times in following God and submitting to His will. It is going to come on all who bear with them the Spirit of God.

Let us go to II Timothy 2 to a little bit different context. The illustration that Paul uses is, I think, good.

II Timothy 2:2-4 And the things that you have heard from me among

many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who has enlisted him as a soldier.

In this illustration Paul makes a metaphor out of a soldier in battle, that there are times in our life that we are battling, and so we have to endure them as a good soldier. Ephesians 6 adds another little piece to this that is very helpful.

Ephesians 6:10-12 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.

What this verse adds is that the warfare, the potential for discomfort and pain, the potential for suffering, the need for sacrifice will be there even when times are good. I will call "times that are good" is when we are not suffering, when everything seems to be on the up and up, and we are going along. But because Satan is never very far from the picture, then trouble is never very far away, because he is seeking to destroy God's purpose. He is seeking to bring about the deception and the loss of everyone in whom is God's Spirit. I am more concerned about this particular aspect by far than I am about persecution.

I want to go back to Romans 7. Here is the battle that all of us are most likely to fight all the time. It will be our most common battle. We will start in verse 10. Paul is explaining regarding his own life.

Romans 7:10-17 And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good; so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing I do not understand. For I will to do, that do I not practice; but what I hate, that do I. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now then it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.

Here is an apostle—a man really devoted to Jesus Christ—willing to sacrifice his life day in and day out, and yet here he is saying that right beneath the surface of his conversion there is the

principle that he calls "the law working in his members," which of course could motivate him, incite him to sin. In verse 24 he reaches a conclusion that gives you an idea of the mindset of the apostle Paul at times. I do not mean that it was always this way, but it is a very clear recognition of the battle, the warfare that he felt he was in.

Romans 7:24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Let us make a bit of a summary here. Peter is clear in saying that we have been called to suffer, following the example of Jesus Christ, but Paul clarifies that the suffering is very likely not only to follow the choices as it did in Jesus' case, but it can also precede. Now as he describes the struggle in Roman 7, that preceded the actual, let us say, committing of any sin that he might commit, and therefore be punished for it. But there was a psychological agony in his mind. That is why he called himself "wretched," and this was a man who was not running around sinning all the time. I would have to say that he probably sinned very few times. But at the same time, he was struggling with what was going on between what he calls "the law of his mind" and "the law in his members." It was "the law in his members" that Satan could incite. There was where the warfare was.

We are going to make this very clear of where the sacrifice has to take place so that we can submit to the will of God. The struggle is in making the choices to submit *our* will to God's. In that struggle there will be an internal stress, a psychological struggle, as human nature wars against the spirit of our mind. So the conclusion, brethren, is that it is not all that easy offering oneself to be a living sacrifice, submitted exclusively to the will of God. The sacrificing of a person's will to God *will* induce stress.

Satan and his demons have established an ordered system called in the Bible "the world (the cosmos)." They have done it by means of their spirit, and that spirit produces strong opposition within us to resist submitting to God's will.

I want you to turn to James 4:1. James picks up the theme here.

James 4:1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

James is talking about the same thing Paul talked about in Romans 7. "Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?"

Is there any doubt in anybody's mind here that war produces pain? Think first of a shooting war—a war with knives, swords, spears, and bombs. Whatever kind of a war that it is, it produces fear. It produces pain. People become injured. They lose their blood. But the war that James is describing that produces strife within a congregation or within a family is going on within one's own mind. As James writes here, it breaks out in conflict within the congregation or within the family when Christians allow their human nature to gain the upper hand against the Spirit of God by giving into their mind's wrongful self-centered desires for satisfaction.

I am now going to read how the Philips Translation translates James 4: 1. This is really rich. It is so clear.

James 4:1 [The Philips Translation] But what about the feuds and struggles that exist among you? Where do you suppose that they come from? Can't you see they arise from conflicting passions within yourself?

I do not think that could be made any clearer. The Greek word translated "lust" in the King James is *hay-don-ay*. It is the root word of our English word "hedon," hedonistic. How this word is used in the Greek is that it indicates the gratification of natural desires, and three times in the King James is translated "pleasures." That is not wrong as long as we understand that in this case it is not entertainment pleasures, but rather it is the mollification and satisfaction of human nature by permitting *it* to fulfill its will. We are going to see this confirmed by the apostle Paul in Galatians 5. Please do not lose my thought here. I am showing us why it is so difficult to submit to the will of God. When Jesus submitted for an entire life, that was awesome! Incredible!

Galatians 5:14-15 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another [have warfare within the family, within the congregation], beware lest you be consumed by one another.

What is he talking about? It looks to me like he is talking about losing salvation. It could be taken that far.

Now in verse 16 a new paragraph begins, and it is going to clarify that thought, and how it can be overcome.

Galatians 5:16-17 I say then [so we are not consumed by our passions], Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not the things that you wish [or that you might will].

Verses 14 and 15 establish this as a parallel of James 4: 1 when James was talking about the lusts that war in our members. Verses 16 and 17 confirm what James said in that there is a war between opposing influences within us, and then we are strongly urged not to give in to the wrong influence. "Walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh."

A key to understanding this is to understand the words "do not do" in the last phrase. What Paul means here is not that we are unable to, but that we must *not* do. There is a big difference between the two.

The ever-present stressful opposition of these two influences is emanating from our own mind, generated by Satan and his demons previously absorbed while living in this spiritually dark world. That is why Paul said that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. In this war, as a

soldier employed by Jesus Christ, we are wrestling against the spiritual influence that we have previously absorbed, and it is still going on to this day.

The demons will occasionally use people to persecute us, but most of the time the stressful and nagging resistance against submitting to God's will is internal and generated by this tension between the two: the law of the mind (meaning the Spirit of God), and the law in our members (meaning human nature). This is where our trials are. If we are really serious about submitting our will to God, sacrificing is not going to be easy. Submitting to the will of God is going to involve a great deal of discipline. It is going to require a great deal of trust. It is going to require a vision that is sharp and clear, and that this is the way we want to go with our life.

If we do not set *our* will to submit to God's will, then the plan of God may be destroyed for us individually, even as the whole plan would have been destroyed if Jesus had not submitted.

Now how many times did I hear Herbert Armstrong say that God will have no one in His family that does not submit to Him, to His government? This is where the war is going on right now. Brethren, in one sense, that is the whole issue for us. Are we going to follow the pattern that was established by Jesus Christ who submitted His will to God perfectly? He said, "I always do what My Father wants." We are so weak by comparison. I have to admit that is the way I am. I am aware of it, and I think that I can say with the apostle Paul, "O wretched man that I am!" But I have not given up yet, and I am not going to give up, because I understand that this is my place in the battlefield, and I am going to do what I can to submit.

Now right here the sermon is going to take a bit of a turn. (Just a little reminder that the whole purpose of this section in this series has been to exhort us to be like Jesus.) We must submit our will to God's as those opportunities present themselves in daily life. Being a living sacrifice is no easy task. It can be frustratingly grievous. It tests our mettle. It tests our faith in God. It tests our love *for* God sometimes almost to the limit. There are times that we might be severely depressed for a period, feeling intense guilt for giving in to the wrong influence; maybe crushed because we feel that we have let God down. But brethren, do not give up. All is not lost. A major reason is a factor that is shown in the relationship between the Father and Son involving God the Father as the Giver, and Jesus, the Son, as the Receiver.

The key to success in our calling is to emulate Jesus as closely as we possibly can in everything. A major plank, or the foundation for doing this, is given to us in II Corinthians 3:16-18.

Brethren, I hope the first part of this sermon in a way is a downer because it is so serious and sobering, but the cavalry is on the way!

II Corinthians 3:16-18 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil [that has blinded us] is taken away [so that we can begin to see what God is doing, that He is reproducing Himself in us]. Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. [We can come to understand that this liberty even involves freedom from death.] But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image [Christ—the Spirit of the Lord] from glory to glory [from the glory of man to the

glory of God], just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

One of the things he is saying here is that we are not alone. We have help, and that help is in the Spirit of the Lord.

These three verses are a concluding summary of this portion of the chapter that began in verse 12. They say that those who turn to the Lord are transformed by the Spirit of the Lord from the glory of man to the glory of the Lord; i.e., into His image. This section is actually confirming Genesis 1:26, "Let us create man in our image."

We are seeing here a little section that is talking about how that is going to be done. It is going to be done by the Spirit of God in us, and that is part of the answer. The purpose of our life is to be transformed into the likeness of Christ. This perfectly agrees with I John 3:2, where it states "We shall be like Him." The importance of this lies in the fact that understanding this and truly believing it gives us the primary direction for life. This is our destiny.

Our destiny is to be transformed into the image of the Son by means of the Spirit of the Lord. Thus we have been given free moral agency, and if we are going to be like Him, it is essential to our spiritual well-being for us to use our will to have the same attitude and action of subjection to God as Christ did. Now we can have them because of a promise of God.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

The "all things" of verse 13 is of course limited to those things necessary for the fulfillment of God's purpose. We will put the word "us" in there, but Paul primarily intended it for himself. Paul was called to be an apostle, and he is saying in effect that whatever was required of him by God to the fulfillment of his responsibility was going to be done because God would provide him with everything that he needed. There are indications, of at least one time, where Paul was resurrected from the dead when he was stoned. That is pretty good provision! God did not give up just because Paul was dead. "Paul, get up!" I do not mean that he was healed immediately, but he had his life back. He probably had a lot of aches and pains and bruises all over his body from the stoning that he got, but nonetheless he was able to get on with the work.

I am sure that Paul is drawing on that experience, and that is why he went so far as to say, "I can do everything that God requires of me in order to fulfill this responsibility." God showed that to Christ. Did not Jesus admit that the works that He did were done by the Father *in* Him? He did. Do you think that God is going to treat us any differently from the way He did Paul, or Jesus? God does not play games like that. If we have been called to carry out an assignment, He will supply everything that we need, so that above all, even if we fall short in everything that He wanted us to do, that we will at least be in His Kingdom.

Philippians 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

He follows that up by saying that God will supply our need.

We are going to go back to the book of Matthew, and we are going to see where Jesus made a statement very similar to this, right in the Sermon on the Mount, as He was beginning His ministry.

Matthew 7:7-11 Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it shall be opened to you: For everyone who asks receives. [That is flat out, is it not? We know that there is a requirement.] and he who seeks finds [which requires some effort], and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him?

God is very generous in what He is willing to give to us in order to carry out the calling that He has given to us.

I want to expand your thinking about this success formula here beginning in verse 7 to the context of the whole chapter. If we go all the way back to verse 1 we will find the subject that He introduced is "cr